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1. Al-Fatihah (The Opening)	سورة الفاتحة	7	7
2. Al-Baqarah (The Cow)	سورة البقرة	286	14
3. Ale- Imran (The Family of Imran)	سورة آل عمران	200	221
4. Al-Nisa' (The Women)	سورة النساء	176	318
5. Al-Ma'ida (The Table Spread with Food)	سورة المائدة	120	432
6. Al-An'am (The Cattle)	سورة الأنعام	165	519
7. Al-A'raf (The Heights)	سورة الأعراف	206	610
8. Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War)	سورة الأنفال	75	727
9. Tawbah (The Repentance)	سورة التوبة	129	769
10. Yunus (Jonah)	سورة يونس	109	853
11. Hud (Prophet Hud)	سورة هود	123	910
12. Yusuf (Prophet Joseph)	سورة يوسف	111	975
13. Al-Ra'd (The Thunder)	سورة الرّعد	43	1057
14. Ibrahim (Abraham)	سورة إبراهيم	52	1090
15. Al-Hijr (The Rocky Tract)	سورة الحجر	99	1123
16. Al-Nahl (The Bees)	سورة النحل	128	1157
17. Al-Isra' (The Journey by Night) or Bani Israel	سورة الإسراء	111	1225
18. Al-Kahf (The Cave)	سورة الكهف	110	1295
19. Maryam (Mary)	سورة مريم	98	1355
20. Ta Ha	سورة طه	135	1394
21. Al-Anbiya' (The Prophets)	سورة الأنبياء	112	1452
22. Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage)	سورة الحج	78	1504
23. Al-Mu'minun (The Believers)	سورة المؤمنون	118	1549
24. Al-Nur (The Light)	سورة النّور	64	1587
25. Al-Furqan (The Criterion)	سورة الفرقان	77	1635
26. Al-Shu'ara' (The Poets)	سورة الشعراء	227	1673
27. Al-Naml (The Ants)	سورة النمل	93	1723

Surah Name	In Arabic	Total Verses	Page
28. Al-Qasas (The Narration)	سورة القصص	88	1766
29. Al-'Ankabut (The Spider)	سورة العنكبوت	69	1816
30. Al-Rum (The Romans)	سورة الروم	60	1856
31. Luqman	سورة لقمان	34	1893
32. Al-Sajdah (The Prostration)	سورة السجدة	30	1917
33. Al-Ahzab (The Confederates)	سورة الأحزاب	73	1934
34. Saba' (Sheba)	سورة سبإ	54	1993
35. Fatir (The Originator of Creation)	سورة فاطر	45	2030
36. Yasin	سورة يس	83	2062
37. As-Saffat (Those Ranged in Ranks)	سورة الصّافّات	182	2101
38. Sa'd (The Letter Sa'd ص)	سورة ص	88	2147
39. Az-Zumar (The Groups)	سورة الزمر	75	2184
40. Mu'min (Believer)/Ghafir (The Forgiver)	سورة غافر	85	2228
41. Fussilat (They are explained in detail)	سورة فصّلت	54	2273
42. Ash-Shuraa (The Consultation)	سورة الشورى	53	2302
43. Az-Zukhruf (The Gold Adornments)	سورة الزخرف	89	2336
44. Al-Dukhan (The Smoke)	سورة الدخان	59	2368
45. Al-Jathiyah (The Kneeling)	سورة الجاثية	37	2386
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47. Muhammad (Muhammad)	سورة محمّد	38	2424
48. Al-Fath (The Victory)	سورة الفتح	29	2444
49. Al-Hujurat (The Dwellings)	سورة الحُجُرات	18	2466
50. Qaf (The Letter “Qaf” ق)	سورة ق	45	2478
51. Adh-Dhariyat (The Winds that Scatter)	سورة الذاريات	60	2497
52. At-Tur (The Mount)	سورة الطور	49	2517
53. Al-Najm (The Star)	سورة النجم	62	2536
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56. Al-Waqi'ah (The Event)	سورة الواقية	96	2594
57. Al- Hadid (Iron)	سورة الحديد	29	2614
58. Al-Mujadila (The Woman Who Disputes)	سورة المجادلة	22	2637
59. Al-Hashr (The Gathering)	سورة الحشر	24	2653
60. Al-Mumtahinah (The Women to be Examined)	سورة الممتحنة	13	2673
61. Al-Saff (The Ranks)	سورة الصّف	14	2687
62. Al-Jumu`ah (Friday)	سورة الجمعة	11	2697
63. Al- Munafiqun (The Hypocrites)	سورة المنافقون	11	2706
64. At-Taghabun (Mutual Loss and Gain)	سورة التغابن	18	2714
65. At-Talaq (The Divorce)	سورة الطلاق	12	2725
66. At-Tahrim (The Prohibition)	سورة التحريم	12	2737
67. Al-Mulk (Dominion)	سورة الملك	30	2750
68. Al- Qalam (The Pen)	سورة القلم	52	2766
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70. Al-Ma`arij (The Ways of Ascent)	سورة المعارج	44	2799
71. Nuh (Noah)	سورة نوح	28	2812
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77. Al-Mursalat (Those sent forth)	سورة المرسلات	50	2885
78. Al-Naba' (The Great News)	سورة النبإ	40	2898
79. Al- Nazi'at (Those Who Pull Out)	سورة النازعات	46	2910
80. 'Abasa (He Frowned)	سورة عبس	42	2924
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84. Al-Inshiqaq (The Splitting Asunder)	سورة الانشقاق	25	2962
85. Al-Buruj (The Constellations)	سورة البروج	22	2970
86. Al-Tariq (The Night-Comer)	سورة الـطارق	17	2978
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88. Al- Ghashiyah (The Overwhelming)	سورة الغاشـيـة	26	2992
89. Al-Fajr (The Dawn)	سورة الفجر	30	2999
90. Al-Balad (The City)	سورة الـبلد	20	3010
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92. Al-Layl (The Night)	سورة الليـل	21	3024
93. Al-Duha (The Morning Light)	سورة الضـحى	11	3032
94. Al-Sharh (The Opening Forth)	سورة الـشرح	8	3040
95. Al-Tin (The Fig)	سورة الـتين	8	3044
96. Al-'Alaq (The Clot) / Iqra	سورة الـعلق	19	3050
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99. Al-Zalzalah (The Earthquake)	سورة الـزلزلة	8	3067
100. Al-'Adiyat (Those That Run)	سورة الـعاديات	11	3071
101. Al-Qari'ah (The Striking Hour)	سورة الـقارعـة	11	3076
102. At-Takathur (The Piling Up)	سورة الـتكاثر	8	3080
103. Al-'Asr (The Time)	سورة الـعصر	3	3084
104. Al-Humazah (The Slanderer)	سورة الـهمزة	9	3087
105. Al-Fil (The Elephant)	سورة الـفيل	5	3091
106. Quraysh (The Tribe of Quraysh)	سورة قريش	4	3094
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الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Fatihah

الْفَاتِحَةِ

Introduction and Summary

C.42 - The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose

First comes that beautiful Surah,

15. Each chapter or portion of the Quran is called a Surah, which means a Degree Or Step, by which we mount up.

Sometimes whole Surahs were revealed, and sometimes portions, which were arranged under the Prophet's directions.

Some Surahs are long, and some are short, but a logical thread runs through them all. Each verse of the Surah is called an Ayah (plural, Ayat), which means also a sign.

A verse of revelation is a Sign of Allah's beautiful handiwork in the material creation or His dealings in history are signs to us, if we would understand. Some Ayat are long, and some are short.

The Ayah is the true unit of the Quran.

The Opening Chapter of Seven Verses,

16. Fatihah: Opening Chapter.

17. These seven verses form a complete unit by themselves, and are recited in every prayer and on many other occasions.

Cf. 15:87.

Rightly called the Essence of the Book.

It teaches us the perfect Prayer.

For if we can pray aright, it means

That we have some knowledge of Allah

And His attributes, of His relations

To us and His creation, which includes

Ourselves; that we glimpse the source

From which we come, and that final goal

Which is our spiritual destiny

Under Allah's' true Judgement: then

We offer ourselves to Allah and seek His light.

C.43

Prayer is the heart of Religion and Faith

But how shall we pray? What words shall convey

The yearnings of our miserable ignorant hearts

To the Knower of all? It is worthy of Him

Or of our spiritual nature to ask

For vanities, or even for such physical needs

As our daily bread? The Inspired One

Taught us a Prayer that sums up our faith,

Our hope, and our aspiration in things that matter.

We think in devotion of Allah's name and His Nature;

We praise Him for His creation and His Cherishing care;

We call to mind the Realities, seen and unseen;

We offer Him worship and ask His guidance;

And we know the straight from the crooked path

By the light of His grace that illumines the righteous.

18. By universal consent it is rightly placed at the beginning of the Quran, as summing up, in marvelously terse and comprehensive words, man's relation to Allah in contemplation and prayer.

In our spiritual contemplation the first words should be those of praise. If the praise is from our inmost being, it brings us into union with Allah's Will. Then our eyes see all good, peace, and harmony. Evil, rebellion, and conflict are purged out. They do not exist for us, for our eyes are lifted up above them in praise. Then we see Allah's attributes better (verse 2-4).

This leads us to the attitude of worship and acknowledgement (verse 5).

And finally comes prayer for guidance, and contemplation of what guidance means (verse 6-7).

Allah needs no praise, for He is above all praise; He needs no petition, for He knows our needs better than we do ourselves; and His bounties are open without asking, to the righteous and the sinner alike. The prayer

is for our own spiritual education, consolation, and confirmation.

That is why the words in this Surah are given to us in the form in which we should utter them. When we reach enlightenment, they flow spontaneously from us.



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ (١)

1. In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

C19. The Arabic words "**Rahman** and **Rahim**" translated "Most Gracious" and "Most Merciful" are both intensive forms referring to different aspects of Allah's attributes of Mercy.

The Arabic intensive is more suited to express Allah's attributes than the superlative degrees in English. The latter implies a comparison with other beings or with other times or places, while there is no being like unto Allah, and He is independent of Time and Place.

Mercy may imply pity, long-suffering, patience, and forgiveness, all of which the sinners need and Allah Most Merciful bestows in abundant measure. But there is a Mercy that goes before even the need arises, the Grace which is ever watchful, and flows from Allah Most Gracious to all His creatures, protecting them, preserving them, guiding them, and leading them to clearer light and higher life. For this reason the attribute Rahman (Most Gracious) is not applied to any but Allah, but the attribute Rahim (Merciful), is a general term, and may also be applied to Men.

To make us contemplate these boundless gifts of Allah, the formula:

"In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful";

is placed before every Surah of Quran (except the ninth), and repeated at the beginning of every act by the Muslim

who dedicates his life to Allah, and whose hope is in His Mercy.

Opinion is divided whether the Bismillah should be numbered as a separate verse or not. It is unanimously agreed that it is a part of the Quran. Therefore it is better to give it an independent number in the first Surah. For subsequent Surahs it is treated as an introduction or headline, and therefore not numbered.

الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢)

2. Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

C20. The Arabic word **Rabb**, usually translated Lord, has also the meaning of cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity. Allah cares for all the worlds He has created.

There are many worlds;

- astronomical and physical worlds,
- worlds of thought,
- spiritual world, and so on.

In every one of them, Allah is all-in-all. We express only one aspect of it when we say:

"In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

The mystical division between:

1. **Nasut:** the human world knowable by the senses.
2. **Malakut:** the invisible world of angels, and
3. **Lahut:** the divine world of Reality, requires a whole volume to explain it.

الرَّحْمَـنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٣)

3. Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٤)

4. Master of the Day of Judgment.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (٥)

5. Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek.

C21. On realizing in our souls God's love and care, His grace and mercy, and His power and justice (as Ruler of the Day of Judgment), the immediate result is that we bend in the act of worship, and see both our shortcomings and His all-sufficient power.

The emphatic form means that not only do we reach the position of worshipping Allah and asking for His help, but we worship Him alone and ask for His aid only. For there is none other than He worthy of our devotion and able to help us.

The plural "we" indicates that we associate ourselves with all who seek Allah, thus strengthening ourselves and strengthening them in a fellowship of faith.

اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ (٦)

6. Show us the straight way.

C22. If we translate by the English word "guide," we shall have to say:

"Guide us to and in the straight Way."

For we many be wandering aimlessly, and the first step is to find the Way; and the second need is to keep in the Way: our own wisdom may fail in either case.

The straight Way is often the narrow Way, or the steep Way, which many people shun (90:11).

By the world's perversity the straight Way is sometimes stigmatized and the crooked Way praised.

How are we to judge?

We must ask for God's guidance. With a little spiritual insight we shall see which are the people who walk in the light of Allah's grace, and which are those that walk in the darkness of Wrath. This also would help our judgment.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ...

7. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,

... غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ ...

Those whose (portion) is not wrath,

C23. Note that the words relating to Grace are connected actively with Allah; those relating to Wrath are impersonal.

In the one case Allah's Mercy encompasses us beyond our deserts.

In the other case our own actions are responsible for the Wrath, the negative of Grace, Peace, or Harmony.

... وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ (٧)

and who go not astray.

C24. Are there two categories?

- those who are in the darkness of Wrath and
- those who stray?

The first are those who deliberately break Allah's law; the second those who stray out of carelessness or negligence.

Both are responsible for their own acts or omissions.

In opposition to both are the people who are in the light of Allah's Grace: for His Grace not only protects them from active wrong (if they will only submit their will to Him) but also from straying into paths of temptation or carelessness.

The negative gair should be construed as applying not to the way, but as describing men protected from two dangers by Allah's Grace.



The Absolute Reality

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Baqarah

الْبَقَرَةَ

Introduction and Summary

As the Opening Surah sums up in seven beautiful verses the essence of the Quran, so this Surah sums up in 286 verses the whole teaching of the Quran. It is closely reasoned argument.

Summary- It begins (verses 1-29) by classifying men into three broad categories, depending on how they receive Allah's message.

This leads to the story of the creation of man, the high destiny intended for him, his fall, and the hope held out to him (2:30-39).

Israel's story is then told according to their own records and traditions-what privileges they received and how they abused them (2:40-86), thus illustrating again as by a parable the general story of man.

In particular, reference is made to Moses and Jesus and their struggles with an unruly people: how people of the Book played false their own lights and in their pride rejected Muhammad, who came in the true line of Prophets (2:87-121).

They falsely laid claim to the virtues of Father Abraham; he was indeed a righteous Imam, but he was the progenitor of Ismail's line (Arabs) as well as of Israel's line, and he with Ismail built the Ka'bah (the House of Allah in Makkah) and purified it, thus establishing a common religion, of which Islam is the universal exponent (2:122-141).

The Ka'bah was now to be the center of universal worship and the symbol of Islamic unity (2:142-167).

The Islamic Ummah (brotherhood) having thus been established with its definite centre and symbol, ordinances are laid down for the social life of the community, with the proviso (2:177) that righteousness does not consist in formalities, but in faith, kindness, prayer, charity, probity, and patience under suffering. The ordinances relate to food and drink, bequests, fasts, jihad, wine and gambling, treatment of orphans and women, etc, (2:168-242).

Lest the subject of jihad should be misunderstood, it is taken up again in the story of Saul, Goliath and David, in contrast to the story of Jesus (2:243-253).

And so the lesson is enforced that true virtues lies in practical deeds of manliness, kindness, and good faith (2:254-283), and Allah's nature is called to mind in the sublime Ayah al Kursi, the Verse of the Throne (2:255).

The Surah ends with an exhortation to Faith, Obedience, a sense of Personal Responsibility, and Prayer (2:284-286).

This is the longest Surah of the Quran, and in it occurs the longest verse (2:282). The name of the Surah is from the Parable of the Heifer in 2:67-71, which illustrates the insufficiency of carping obedience.

When faith is lost, people put off obedience with various excuses; even when at last they obey in the letter, they fail in the spirit, which means that they get fossilized, and their self-sufficiency prevents them from seeing that spiritually they are not alive but dead. For life is movement, activity, striving, fighting against baser things. And this is the burden of the Surah.

This is in the main an early Madinah.

C.44 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:1-29)

The Message of Allah, is a guide that is sure
To those who seek His light, but those
Who reject faith are blind: their hearts
Are sealed. Woe to the hypocrites,
Self-deceived and deceiving others,
With mockery on their lips, and mischief
In their hearts, and fear; the clouds
That bring fertilizing rain to others,
To them bring out deafening thunder-peals
And lightning flashes blinding to their eyes.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم (١)

1. A.L.M.

C25. These are abbreviated letters, the Maqatta'at, on which a general discussion will be found in Appendix I.

The particular letters, Alif, Lam, Mim, are found prefixed to this Surah, and Surahs 3, 29, 30, 31 and 32 (six in all).

- In Surah 2 and Surah 3 the argument is about the rise and fall of nations, their past, and their future in history, with ordinances for the new universal people of Islam.
- In Surah 29 a similar argument about nations leads off to the mystery of Life and Death, Failure and Triumph, Past and Future, in the history of individual souls.
- The burden of Surah 30 is that Allah is the source of all things and all things return to Him.
- In Surah 31 and Surah 32 the same lesson is enforced: Allah is the Creator and He will be the Judge on the Last Day. There is therefore a common thread, the mystery of Life and Death, Beginning and End.

Much has been written about the meaning of these letters, but of it is pure conjecture. Some commentators are content to recognize them as some mystic symbols of which it is unprofitable to discuss the meaning by more verbal logic. (R).

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٢)

2. This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.

C26. Taqwa and the verbs and nouns connected with the root, signify:

1. the fear of Allah which according to the writer of Proverbs (1:7) in the Old Testament is the beginning of Wisdom;
2. restraint, or guarding one's tongue, hand, and heart from evil;
3. hence righteousness, piety good conduct.

All these ideas are implied; in the translation, only one or other of these ideas can be indicated according to the context.

See also 47:17; and 74:56, n.5808.

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاةَ ...

3. Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer,

... وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (٣)

and spend out of what We have provided for them.

C27. All bounties proceed from Allah.

- They may be physical gifts, e.g., food, clothing, houses, gardens, wealth, etc. or
- intangible gifts, e.g., influence, power, birth and the opportunities flowing from it, health talents, etc. or
- spiritual gifts, e.g., insight into good and evil, understanding of men, the capacity for love, etc.

We are to use all in humility and moderation. But we are also to give out of every one of them something that contributes to the well-being of others.

We are to be neither ascetics nor luxurious sybarites, neither selfish misers nor thoughtless prodigals.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ...

4. And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time,

... وَبِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ (٤)

and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter.

C28. Righteousness comes from a secure faith, from sincere devotion to Allah, and from unselfish service to Man.

أُوْلَـئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٥)

5. They are on (true) guidance, from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper.

C29. Prosperity must be taken as referring to all the kinds of bounty which we discussed in the note 2:3 above.

The right use of one kind leads to an increase in that and other kinds, and that is prosperity.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ ...

6. As to those who reject Faith,

C30. Kafara kufr, kafr, and derivative forms of the word, imply a deliberate rejection of Faith as opposed to a mistaken idea of Allah or faith, which is not inconsistent with an earnest desire to see the truth. Where there is such desire, the grace and mercy of Allah gives guidance.

But that guidance is not efficacious when it is deliberately rejected and the possibility of rejection follows from the grant of free will.

The consequence of the rejection is that the spiritual faculties become dead or impervious to better influences.

See also n. 93 to 2:88.

... سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦)

it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.

خَتَمَ اللّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ ...

7. Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing,

C31. All actions are referred to Allah. Therefore, when we get the penalty of our deliberate sin, and our senses become impervious to good, the penalty is referred to the justice of Allah.

... وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ...

and on their eyes is a veil;

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عظِيمٌ (٧)

great is the penalty they (incur).

C32. The penalty here is the opposite of the prosperity referred to in 2:5. As we go down the path of sin, our penalty gathers momentum, just as goodness brings its own capacity for greater goodness.

Section 2

... وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ

8. Of the people there are some who say:

"We believe in Allah and the Last Day,"

C33. We now come to a third class of people, the hypocrites.

They are untrue to themselves, and therefore their hearts, they soon pass into the category of those who deliberately reject light.

... وَمَا هُم بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨)

but they do not (really) believe.

...يُخَادِعُونَ اللّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

9. Fain would they deceive Allah and those who believe,

... وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلاَّ أَنفُسَهُم وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٩)

but they only deceive themselves and realize (it) not!

فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّهُ مَرَضاً...

10. In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease,

C34. The insincere man who thinks he can get the best of both worlds by compromising with good and evil only increased the disease of his heart, because he is not true to himself.

Even the good which comes to him he can pervert to evil. So the rain which fills out the ear of corn or lends fragrance to the rose also lends strength to the thorn or adds strength to the poison of the deadly nightshade.

... وَلَهُم عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ (١٠)

and grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لاَ تُفْسِدُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ ...

11. When it is said to them: "Make not mischief on the earth,"

... قَالُواْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ (١١)

they say: "Why, we only want to make peace!"

أَلا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَـكِن لاَّ يَشْعُرُونَ (١٢)

12. Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they realize (it) not.

C35. Much mischief is caused (sometimes unwittingly) by people who think that they have a mission of peace, when they have not even a true perception of right and wrong.

By their blind arrogance they depress the good and encourage the evil.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُواْ كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ ...

13. When it is said to them: "Believe as the others believe"

... قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاء ...

they say: "Shall we believe as the fools believe?" --

... أَلا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاء وَلَـكِن لاَّ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣)

nay,

of a surety they are the fools but they do not know.

C36. This is another phase of the hypocrite and the cynic.

"Faith" he says, "is good enough to fools."

But his cynicism may be the greatest folly in the eyes of Allah.

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا...

14. When they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe,"

C37. A deeper phase of insincerity is actual duplicity. But it never pays in the end. If we compare such a man to a trader, he loses in the bargain.

... وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَى شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا ...

but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say:

... إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (١٤)

"We are really with you, we (were) only jesting."

... اللّهُ يَسْتَهْزِىءُ بِهِمْ ...

15. Allah will throw back their mockery on them,

... وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (١٥)

and give them rope in their trespasses; so they will wander like blind ones (to and fro).

أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلاَلَةَ بِالْهُدَى...

16. These are they who have bartered guidance for error:

... فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ (١٦)

but their traffic is profitless, and they have lost true direction.

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَاراً ...

17. Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire;

C38. The man wanted light; he only kindled a fire. It produced a blaze, and won the applause of all around. But it did not last long. When the flame when out as was inevitable, the darkness was worse than before. And they all lost their way.

So hypocrisy, deception, arrogant compromise with evil, cynicism, or duplicity may win temporary applause. But the true light of faith and sincerity is wanting, and therefore it must mislead and ruin all concerned. In the consternation they cannot speak or hear each other, and of course they cannot see; so they end like the deliberate rejecters of Faith (2:7), wildly groping about, dumb, deaf and blind.

... فَلَمَّا أَضَاءتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ...

when it lighted all around him, Allah took away their light

... وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لاَّ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧)

and left them in utter darkness, so they could not see.

صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لاَ يَرْجِعُونَ (١٨)

18. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return (to the path).

أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاء فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ...

19. Or (another similitude) is that of a rain-laden cloud from the sky; in it are zones of darkness, and thunder and lightning,

C39. A wonderfully graphic and powerful simile applying to those who reject Faith. In their self-sufficiency they are undisturbed normally.

But what happens when a great storm breaks over them?

They cover their ears against thunder-clasps and the lightning nearly blinds them. They are in mortal fear, but Allah encompasses them around - even them, for He at all times encompasses all.

He give them rope. In the intervals of deafening noise and blinding flashes, there are moments of steady light and these creatures take advantage of them, but again they are plunged into darkness.

Perhaps they curse; perhaps they think that the few moments of effective light are due to their own intelligence!

How much wiser would they be if they humbled themselves and sought the light of Allah!

... يَجْعَلُونَ أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِم مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ...

they press their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, the while they are in terror of death.

... واللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ (١٩)

But Allah is ever round the rejecters of Faith!

... يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ

20. The lightning all but snatches away their sight;

... كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُم مَّشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا...

every time the light (helps) them, they walk therein, and when the darkness grows on them, they stand still.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ ...

And if Allah willed, He could take away their faculty of hearing and seeing;

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٠)

for Allah hath power over all things.

Section 3

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ...

21. O ye people!

... اعْبُدُواْ رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (٢١)

adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may become ighteous.

C40. For **Taqwa** see 2:2 n. 26.

I connect this dependent clause with "adore, etc." above, though it could be connected with "created".

According to my construction the argument will be as follows.

Adoration is the act of the highest and humblest reverence and worship. When you get into that relationship with Allah, Who is your Creator and Guardian, your faith produces works of righteousness.

It is a chance given you: will you exercise your free will and take it? If you do, your whole nature will be transformed.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الأَرْضَ فِرَاشاً وَالسَّمَاء بِنَاء وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء...

22. Who has made the earth your couch, and the heaven your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens;

... فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقاً لَّكُمْ...

and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance;

... فَلاَ تَجْعَلُواْ لِلّهِ أَندَاداً وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٢)

then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth).

C41. Further proofs of Allah's goodness to you are given in this verse. Your whole life, physical and spiritual, depends upon Him. The spiritual is figured by the Canopy of Heaven.

The truth has been brought plainly before you. Will you still resist it and go after false gods, the creation of your own fancy?

The false gods may be idols, superstitions, Self, or even great or glorious things like Poetry, Art, or Science, when set up as rivals to Allah. They may be pride of race, pride of birth, pride of wealth or position, pride of power, pride of learning, or even spiritual pride.

وَإِن كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ...

23. And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto;

... وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءكُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٣)

and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true.

C42. How do we know that there is revelation, and that is from Allah?

Here is a concrete test.

The Teacher of Allah's Truth has placed before you many Surahs. Can you produce one like it?

If there is any one besides Allah, who can inspire spiritual truth in such noble language, produce your evidence.

Or is it that your doubts are merely argumentative, refractory, against your own inner light, or conscience?

All true revelation is itself a miracle, and stands on its own merits.

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَن تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ...

24. But if ye cannot,- and of a surety ye cannot,- then fear the fire whose fuel is Men and Stones-

C43. According to commentators the **"Stones"** mentioned in this verse refer to the idols which the polytheists worshipped. Thus, far from coming to the aid of their worshippers, the false gods would be means of aggravating their torment. [Eds].

... أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ (٢٤)

which is prepared for those who reject Faith.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ ...

25. But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness,

... أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ...

that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow.

... كُلَّمَا رُزِقُواْ مِنْهَا مِن ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقاً قَالُواْ ...

Every time they are fed with fruits therefrom, they say:

... هَـذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِن قَبْلُ ...

"Why, this is what we were fed with before,"

... وَأُتُواْ بِهِ مُتَشَابِهاً...

for they are given things in similitude;

... وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ...

and they have therein companions (pure and holy);

C44. What can be more delightful than a Garden where you observe from a picturesque height a beautiful landscape round you, - rivers flowing with crystal water, and fruit tree of which the choicest fruit is before you.

The fruit of goodness is goodness, similar, but choicer in every degree of ascent. You think it is the same, but it is because of your past experiences and associations of memory. (R).

... وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُون (٢٥)

and they abide therein (for ever).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَسْتَحْيِي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلاً مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا...

26. Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things, lowest as well as highest.

C45. The word for "the lowest" in the original Arabic means a gnat, a byword in the Arabic language for the weakest of creatures.

In 29:41, which was revealed before this Surah, the similitude of the Spider was used, and similarly in 22:73,

there is the similitude of the Fly. For similitudes taken from magnificent forces of nature, expressed in exalted language, see 2:19 above.

To Allah all His creation has some special meaning appropriate to itself, and some of what we consider the lowest creatures have wonderful aptitudes, e.g., the spider or the fly.

Parables like these may be an occasion of stumbling to those "who forsake the path"; in other words those who deliberately shut their eyes to Allah's Signs, and their Penalty is attributed to Allah, the Cause of all causes.

But lest there should be misunderstanding, it is immediately added that the stumbling and offence only occur as the result of the sinner's own choice of the wrong course. Verses 26 and 27 form one sentence and should be read together.

"Forsaking the path" is defined in 2:27, viz.,

breaking solemn covenants which the sinner's own soul had ratified, causing division among mankind, who were meant to be one brotherhood, and doing as much mischief as possible in the life on this earth, for the life beyond will be on another plane, where no rope will be given to evil.

The mention of Covenant (2:27) has a particular and a general signification.

The particular one has reference to the Jewish tradition that a Covenant was entered into with "Father Abraham" that in return for Allah's favours the seed of Abraham would serve Allah faithfully. But as a matter of fact a great part of Abraham's progeny were in constant spiritual rebellion against Allah, as is testified by their own Prophets and Preachers and by Muhammad Mustafa.

The general signification is that a similar Covenant is entered into by every creature of Allah: for Allah's loving care, we at least owe Him the fullest gratitude and willing obedience.

The sinner, before the darkness his own conscience, knows this, and yet he not only "forsakes the path" but

resists the Grace of Allah which comes to save him. That is why his case becomes hopeless. But the loss is his own. He cannot spoil Allah's design.

The good man is glad to retrace his steps from any lapses of which may have been guilty, and in his case Allah's Message reclaims him with complete understanding. (R).

... فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ...

Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord;

... وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَـذَا مَثَلاً...

but those who reject Faith say: "What means Allah by this similitude?"

... يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيراً وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيراً...

By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path,

... وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلاَّ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٢٦)

but He causes not to stray, except those who forsake (the path).

الَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ...

27. Those who break Allah's Covenant after it is ratified, and who sunder what Allah has ordered to be joined,

... وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ أُولَـئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٢٧)

and do mischief on earth: These cause loss (only) to themselves.

... كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ

28. How can ye reject the faith in Allah?

C46. In the preceding verses Allah has used various arguments.

- He has recalled His goodness (2:21-22);
- resolved doubts (2:23);
- plainly set forth the penalty of wrong-doing (2:24);

- given glad tidings (2:25);
- shown how misunderstandings arise from a deliberate rejection of the light and breach of the Covenant (2:26-27).

Now (2:28-29) He pleads with His creatures and appeals to their own subjective feelings.

- He brought you into being.
- The mysteries of life and death are in His hands.
- When you die on this earth, that is not the end. You were of Him, and you must return to Him.
- Look around you and realize your own dignity; it is from Him.

The immeasurable depths of space above and around you may stagger you. They are part of His plan. What you have imagined as the seven firmaments (and any other scheme you may construct) bears witness to His design of order and perfection, for His knowledge (unlike yours) is all- comprehending.

And yet will you deliberately reject or obscure or deaden the faculty of Faith which has been put into you?

... وَكُنتُمْ أَمْوَاتاً فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ...

Seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life;

... ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٨)

then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return.

...هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً

29. It is He who hath created for you all things that are on earth;

... ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاء فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ...

moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments;

... وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٩)

and of all things he hath perfect knowledge.

C.45 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:30-39)

Yet man! What wonderful destiny
Is thine! Created to be
al' viceregent on earth!
Yet beguiled by evil! Set for a season
On this earth on probation
To purge thy stain, with the promise
Of guidance and hope from on high,
From the Oft-Returning, Merciful!
Wilt thou choose right and regain
Thy spiritual home with Allah?

Section 4

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ...

30. Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth."

... قَالُواْ أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاء...

They said, "Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?

... وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ...

Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?"

... قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٠)

He said: "I know what ye know not."

C47. It would seem that the angels, though holy and pure, and endued with power from Allah, yet represented only one side of Creation. We may imagine them without passion or emotion, of which the highest flower is love.

If man was to be endued with emotions, those emotions would lead him to the highest and drag him to the lowest.

The power of will or choosing would have to go with them, in order that man might steer his own bark. This power of will (when used aright) gave him to some extent a mastery over his own fortunes and over nature, thus bringing him nearer to the God-like nature which has supreme mastery and will.

We may suppose the angels had no independent wills of their own; their perfection in other ways reflected Allah's perfection but could not raise them to the dignity of vicegerency.

The perfect vicegerent is he who has the power of initiative himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of his Principal.

The distinction is expressed by Shakespeare (Sonnet 94) in those fine lines:

"They are the lords and owners of their faces.

Others but stewards of their excellence."

The angels in their one-sidedness saw only the mischief consequent on the misuse of the emotional nature by man; perhaps they also, being without emotions, did not understand the whole of Allah's nature, which gives and asks for love. In humility and true devotion to Allah, they remonstrate; we must not imagine the least tinge of jealousy, as they are without emotion.

This mystery of love being above them, they are told that they do not know and they acknowledge (in 2:32 below) not their fault (for there is no question of fault) but their imperfection of knowledge. At the same time, the matter is brought home to them when the actual capacities of man are shown to them (2:31, 33).

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الأَسْمَاء كُلَّهَا ...

31. And He taught Adam the names of all things;

C48. "The names of things": according to commentators means the inner nature and qualities of things, and things here would include feelings.

The particular qualities or feelings which were outside the nature of angels were put by Allah into the nature of man. Man was thus able to love and understand love, and thus plan and initiate, as becomes the office of vicegerent.

The angels acknowledged this. These things they could only know from the outside, but they had faith, or belief in the Unseen. And they knew that Allah saw all - what others see, what others do not see, what others may even wish to conceal.

Man has many qualities which are latent or which he may wish to suppress or conceal, to his own detriment. (R).

... ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلآئِكَةِ...

then He placed them before the angels,

... فَقَالَ أَنبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاء هَـؤُلاء إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣١)

and said: "Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right."

قَالُواْ سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣٢)

32. They said:

"Glory to Thee, of knowledge we have none, save that Thou hast taught us:

in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."

... قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنبِئْهُم بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ

33. He said: "O Adam! tell them their natures."

... فَلَمَّا أَنبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ قَالَ

When he had told them, Allah said:

... أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

"Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth,

... وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ (٣٣)

and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?"

... وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ اسْجُدُواْ لآدَمَ

34. And behold, We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam;"

... فَسَجَدُواْ إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ ...

and they bowed down, not so Iblis,

C49. The Arabic may also be translated: "They bowed down, except Iblis."

In that case Iblis (Satan) would be one of the angels.

But the theory of fallen angels is not usually accepted in Muslim theology. In 18:50 Iblis is spoken of as a Jinn.

We shall discuss later the meaning of this word. (R).

.... أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ...

he refused and was haughty,

... وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٣٤)

he was of those who reject Faith.

... وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ

35. We said:

"O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden,

C50. Was the Garden of Eden a place on this earth?

Obviously not. For, in verse 36 below, it was after the Fall that the sentence was pronounced: "On earth will be your dwelling."

Before the Fall, we must suppose Man to be on another plane altogether - of felicity, innocence, trust, a spiritual existence, with the negation of enmity, want of faith, and all evil. (R).

... وَكُلاَ مِنْهَا رَغَداً حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا...

and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will,

... وَلاَ تَقْرَبَا هَـذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٣٥)

but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression."

C51. "Zulm" in Arabic implies harm, wrong, injustice, or transgression, and may have reference to oneself;

when the wrong is done to others it implies tyranny and oppression;

the idea of wrong naturally connects itself with darkness, which is another shade of meaning carried with the root word.

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ...

36. Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been.

C52. The word "Iblis" in the verse 34 above is derived from the root idea of desperateness or rebellion whereas "Satan" conveys the idea of perversity or enmity.

Note the appropriateness of the term on each occasion.

Also, "slipping" from the Garden denotes the idea of Evil gradually tempting man from a higher to a lower state. (R).

... وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ...

We said:

"Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves.

C53. Allah's decree is the result of man's action.

Note the transition in Arabic from the singular number in 2:33, to the dual in 2:35, and the plural here, which I have indicated in English by "All ye people."

Evidently Adam is the type of all mankind, and the sexes go together in all spiritual matters. Moreover, the expulsion applied to Adam, Eve, and Satan, and the Arabic plural is appropriate for any number greater for any number greater than two.

... وَلَكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ (٣٦)

On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time."

C54. Man's sojourn in this lower state, where he is partly an animal of this earth, is for a time.

But he must fulfil his lower duties also, for they too are a part of his spiritual training.

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِن رَّبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ...

37. Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned toward him;

C55. As "names" in verse 31 above is used for the "nature of things", so **"words"** here mean "inspiration" "spiritual knowledge".

The Arabic word used for **"learn"** here implies some effort on his part to which Allah's Grace responded.

The Arabic word for "Repentance" (Tawbah) means "turning" and the intensive word (tawwwab) for Allah's forgiveness (Oft-Returning" or "Ever-Returning") is from the same root.

For repentance, three things are necessary:

- the sinner must acknowledge his wrong;
- he must give it up; and
- he must resolve to eschew it for the future.

Man's nature is weak, and he may have to return again and again for mercy. So long as he does it sincerely, Allah is Oft-returning, Most Merciful. For His grace helps out the sinner's shortcomings.

... إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (٣٧)

for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُواْ مِنْهَا جَمِيعاً...

38. We said:

"Get ye down all from here;

... فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّي هُدًى ...

and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me,

C56. Note the transition from the plural "We" at the beginning of the verse to the singular "Me" later in the same verse.

Allah speaks of Himself usually in the first person plural "We"; it is the plural of respect and honour and is used in human language in Royal proclamations and decrees. But where a special personal relationship is expressed the singular, "I" or "Me" is used. Cf. 26:52, etc.

In spite of Man's fall, and in consequence of it, assurance of guidance is given. In case man follows the guidance he is free from any fear for the present or the future, and any grief or sorrow for the past. The soul thus freed grows nearer to Allah.

...فَمَن تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٣٨)

whosoever follows My guidance on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَكَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ...

39. "But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be Companions of the Fire;

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٣٩)

they shall abide therein."

C57. As their rejection of faith was deliberate and definite, so the consequences must be of an abiding character. (R).

C.46 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:40-86)

Amongst men what nation had higher chances
In the realm of the Spirit than the Children of Israel?
But again and again did they fail in the Spirit.
They rebelled against Moses and murmured
In the wilderness; the Prophets they slew
And the Signs they rejected; they falsified
Scripture and turned their back on righteousness.

Section 5

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

40. O children of Israel!

... اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ...

call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon you,

... وَأَوْفُواْ بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ (٤٠)

and fulfil your Covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you and fear none but Me.

C58. The appeal is made to Israel subjectively in terms of their own tradition.

You claim to be a favoured nation; have you forgotten My favours?

You claim a special Covenant with Me: I have fulfilled My part of the Covenant by bringing you out of the land of bondage and giving you Canaan, the land "flowing with milk and honey" how have you fulfilled your part of the Covenant?

Do you fear for your national existence?

If you fear Me, nothing else will matter.

وَآمِنُواْ بِمَا أَنزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ ...

41. And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you,

C59. You receive revelations before: now comes one confirming it: its first appeal should be to you: are you to be the first to reject it?

And reject it for what?

Allah's Signs are worth more than all your paltry considerations. And the standard of duty and righteousness is to be taken from Allah, and not from priests and customs.

... وَلاَ تَكُونُواْ أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ...

and be not the first to reject faith therein,

... وَلاَ تَشْتَرُواْ بِآيَاتِي ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ (٤١)

nor sell My Signs for a small price: and fear Me, and Me alone.

وَلاَ تَلْبِسُواْ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُواْ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤٢)

42. And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know (what it is).

وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُواْ مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ (٤٣)

43. And be steadfast in prayer; practice regular charity; and bow down your heads with those who bow down (in worship).

C60. The argument is still primarily addressed to the Jews, but is of universal application, as in all the teachings of the Quran.

The chief feature of Jewish worship was and is the bowing of the head.

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبرِّ وَتَنسَوْنَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ...

44. Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves, and yet ye study the Scripture?

... أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (٤٤)

Will ye not understand?

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ...

45. Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer:

C61. The Arabic word **Sabr** implies many shades of meaning, which it is impossible to comprehend in one English word.

It implies;

1. patience in the sense of being thorough, not hasty;
2. patient perseverance, constancy, steadfastness, firmness of purpose;
3. systematic as opposed to spasmodic or chance action;
4. a cheerful attitude of resignation and understanding in sorrow, defeat, or suffering, as opposed to murmuring or rebellion, but saved from mere passivity or listlessness, by the element of constancy or steadfastness.

... وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلاَّ عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ (٤٥)

it is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit.

الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلَاقُو رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ (٤٦)

46. Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him.

Section 6

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

47. O children of Israel!

... اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon You,

C62. These words are recapitulated from 2:40, which introduced a general account of Allah's favours to Israel; now we are introduced to a particular account of incidents in Israel's history.

Each incident is introduced by the Arabic word "Iah", which is indicated in the translation by "Remember".

... وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٧)

and that I preferred you to all others (for My message).

... وَاتَّقُوا يَوْماً لاَّ تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَن نَّفْسٍ شَيْئاً

48. Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another

... وَلاَ يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ ...

nor shall intercession be accepted for her,

... وَلاَ يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ ...

nor shall compensation be taken from her,

... وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٤٨)

nor shall anyone be helped (from outside).

C63. Before passing to particular incidents, the conclusions is stated.

Be on your guard; do not think that special favours exempt you from the personal responsibility of each soul.

... وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُم مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ

49. And remember, We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh:

... يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ...

they set you hard tasks and punishments,

... يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءكُمْ ...

slaughtered your sons and let your womenfolk live;

C64. The bondage of Egypt was indeed a tremendous trial. Even the Egyptians' wish to spare the lives of Israel's females when the males were slaughtered, added to the bitterness of Israel. Their hatred was cruel, but their "love" was still more cruel.

About the hard tasks, see Exod, 1:14:

"They made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour."

Pharaoh's taskmasters gave no straw, yet ordered the Israelites to make bricks without straw: Exod. 5:5-19.

Pharaoh's decree was:

"Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive": Exod. 1:22.

It was in consequence of this decree that Moses was hidden three months after he was born, and when he could be hidden no longer, he was put into an ark of bulrushes and cast into the Nile, where he was found by Pharaoh's daughter and wife (28:9), and adopted into the family: Exod. 2:2-10.

Cf. 20:37-40.

Thus Moses was brought up by the enemies of his people. He was chosen by Allah to deliver his people, and Allah's wisdom made the learning and experience and even cruelties of the Egyptian enemies themselves to contribute to the salvation of his people.

... وَفِي ذَٰلِكُم بَلَاء مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ (٤٩)

therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord.

...وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ

50. And remember We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people

... وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ (٥٠)

within your very sight.

C65. When the Israelites at last escaped from Egypt, they were pursued by Pharaoh and his host. By a miracle the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, but the host of Pharaoh was drowned: Exod. 14:5-31.

وَإِذْ وَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ..

51. And remember We appointed forty nights for Moses,

C66. This was after the Ten Commandments and the Laws and Ordinances had been given on Mount Sinai:

Moses was asked up into the Mount, and he was there forty days and forty nights: Exod. 24:18.

But the people got impatient of the delay, made a calf of melted gold, and offered worship and sacrifice to it: Exod. 32:1-8.

... ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ...

and in his absence you took the calf (for worship),

... وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (٥١)

and ye did grievous wrong.

... ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنكُم مِّن بَعْدِ

52. Even then We did forgive you;

C67. Moses prayed for his people, and Allah forgave them. This is the language of the Quran.

The Old Testament version is rougher:

> "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people": Exod. 32:14.

The Muslim position has always been that the Jewish (and Christian) scriptures as they stand cannot be traced direct to Moses or Jesus, but are later compilations. Modern scholarship and Higher Criticism has left no doubt on the subject. But the stories in these traditional books may be used in an appeal to those who use them: only they should be spiritualized, as they are here, and especially in 2:54 below.

... ذَٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٥٢)

there was a chance for you to be grateful.

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ ...

53. And remember We gave Moses the Scripture and the criterion (between right and wrong),

C68. Allah's revelation, the expression of Allah's Will, is the true standard of right and wrong. It may be in a Book or in Allah's dealings in history. All these may be called His Signs or Miracles.

In this passage some commentators take the Scripture and the Criterion (Furqan) to be identical.

Others take them to be two distinct things:

- Scripture being the written Book and
- the Criterion being other Signs.

I agree with the latter view.

The word Furqan also occurs in 21:48 in connection with Moses and Aaron and in the first verse of Surah 25, as well as in its title, in connection with Muhammad.

As Aaron received no Book, Furqan must mean the other Signs.

Mustafa had both the Book and the other Signs: perhaps here too we take the other Signs as supplementing the Book.

Cf. Words worth's "Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong." (Prelude, Book 4)

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (٥٣) ...

there was a chance for you to be guided aright.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ ...

54. And remember Moses said to his people:

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ... ...

"O my people! Ye have indeed wronged yourselves by your worship of the calf,

فَتُوبُوا إِلَى بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ... ...

so turn (in repentance) to your Maker, and slay yourselves (the wrongdoers);

C69. Moses' speech may be construed literally, as translated, in which case it reproduces Exod. 32:27-28 but in a much softened form, for the Old Testament says:

> "Go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor... and there fell of the people that day 3,000 men." (R).

... ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِندَ بَارِئِكُمْ ...

that will be better for you in the sight of your Maker."

the word here translated Maker (Bari) has also in it a touch of the root-meaning of "liberator"-an apt word as referring to the Israelites, who had just been liberated from bondage in Egypt.

... فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥٤)

Then He turned toward you (in forgiveness);

for He is Oft-returning, Most Merciful.

... وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ

55. And remember ye said:

C70. We have hitherto had instances from the Jewish traditional Tawrah (or Pentateuch). Now we have some instances from Jewish traditions in the Talmud, or body of exposition in the Jewish theological schools.

They are based on the Jewish scriptures, but add many marvelous details and homilies.

As to seeing Allah, we have in Exod. 33:20:

> "And He said "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live."

The punishment for insisting on seeing Allah was therefore death; but those who rejected faith were forgiven, and yet they were ungrateful.

... يَا مُوسَى لَن نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً...

"O Moses! we shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly,"

... فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ (٥٥)

but ye were dazed with thunder and lightning even as ye looked on.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٥٦)

56. Then We raised you up after your death; ye had the chance to be grateful.

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى...

57. And We gave you the shade of clouds and sent down to you manna and quails,

C71. Manna: Hebrew, Manhu: Arabic Mahuwa? -

What is it?

In Exod. 16:14 it is described as

"a small round thing as small as the hoar frost on the ground."

It usually rotted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun; the amount necessary for each man was about an Omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to about 2 quarts. This is the Hebrew account, probably distorted by traditional exaggeration.

The actual Manna found to this day in the Sinai region is a gummy saccharine secretion found on a species of Tamarisk. It is produced by the puncture of a species of insect like the cochineal, just as lac is produced by the puncture of the lac insect on certain trees in India.

As to quails, large flights of them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War of 1914-1918. (R).

... كُلُواْ مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ...

saying: "Eat of the good things We have provided for you;"

... وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَـكِن كَانُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٥٧)

(but they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.

... وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُواْ هَـذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ

58. And remember We said:

"Enter this town,

C72. This probably refers to Shittim.

It was the "town of acacias," just east of the Jordan, where the Israelites were guilty of debauchery and the worship of and sacrifice to false gods (Num. 25:1-2, also 8-9); a terrible punishment ensued, including the plague of which 24,000 died.

The word which the transgressors changed may have been a pass-word. In the Arabic text it is "Hittatun" which implies humility and a prayer of forgiveness, a fitting emblem to distinguish them from their enemies.

From this particular incident a more general lesson may be drawn;

- in the hour of triumph we are to behave humbly as in Allah's sight, and our conduct should be exemplary according to Allah's word; otherwise our arrogance will draw its own punishment.

These verses 58-59, may be compared with 7:161-162. There are two verbal differences.

Here (2:58) we have "enter the town" and in 7:161 we have "dwell in this town."

Again in 2:2:59 here we have "infringed (Our command)," and in 7:162, we have "transgressed."

The verbal differences make no difference to the sense.

... فَكُلُواْ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَداً...

and eat of the plenty therein as ye wish;

... وَادْخُلُواْ الْبَابَ سُجَّداً وَقُولُواْ حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ...

but enter the gate with humility, in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults

... وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٨)

and increase (the portion of) those who do good."

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ...

59. But the transgressors changed the word from that which had been given them;

... فَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ رِجْزاً مِّنَ السَّمَاء بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْسُقُونَ (٥٩)

so We sent on the transgressors a plague from heaven, for that they infringed (our command) repeatedly.

Section 7

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَى مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ ...

60. And remember Moses prayed for water for his people;

... فَقُلْنَا اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ...

We said: "Strike the rock with thy staff."

... فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْناً ...

Then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs.

... قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ...

Each group knew its own place for water.

C73. Here we have a reference to the tribal organization of the Jews, which played a great part in their forty years' march through the Arabian deserts (Num. 1 and 2) and their subsequent settlement in the land of Canaan (Josh 13 and 14).

The twelve tribes were derived from the sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (soldier of Allah) after he had wrestled, says Jewish tradition, with Allah (Genesis 32:28).

Israel had twelve sons (Gen. 35:22-26), including Levi and Joseph. The descendants of these twelve sons were the "Children of Israel."

Levi's family got the priesthood and the care of the Tabernacle; they were exempted from military duties for which the census was taken (Num. 1:47-53), and therefore from the distribution of Land in Canaan (Josh. 14:3); they were distributed among all the Tribes, and were really a privileged caste and not numbered among the Tribes;

Moses and Aaron belonged to the house of Levi. On the other hand Joseph, on account of the high position to which he rose in Egypt as the Pharaoh's minister, was the progenitor of two tribes, one in the name of each of his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus there were twelve Tribes in all, as Levi was cut out and Joseph represented two tribes.

Their having fixed stations and watering places in camp and fixed territorial areas later in the Promised Land prevented confusion and mutual jealousies and is pointed to as an evidence of the Providence of Allah acting through His prophet Moses. Cf. also 7:160.

The gushing of twelve springs from a rock evidently refers to a local tradition well known to Jews and Arabs in Al Mustafa's time. Near Horeb close to Mount Sinai, where the Law was given to Moses, is a huge mass of red granite, twelve-feet high and about fifty feet in circumference, where European travelers (e.g. Breydenbach in the 15th Century after Christ saw abundant springs of water twelve in number (see Sale's notes on this passage). It existed in Al Mustafa's time and may still exist to the present day. For anything we know to the contrary. The Jewish tradition would be based on Exod, 17:6:

Thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink.

The story is used as a parable, as is clear from the latter part of the verse. In the desolation and among the rocks of this life people grumble. But they will not be left starving or thirsts of spiritual life. Allah's Messenger can provide abundant spiritual sustenance even from such unpromising things as the hard rocks of life. And all the nations can be grouped round it, each different, yet each in perfect order and discipline.

We are to use with gratitude all spiritual food and drink provided by Allah, and He sometimes provides from unexpected places. We must restrain ourselves from mischief, pride and every kind of evil, for our higher life is based on our probation on this very earth.

... كُلُواْ وَاشْرَبُواْ مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلاَ تَعْثَوْاْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٦٠)

So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah and do no evil nor mischief on the (face of the) earth.

... وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ

61. And remember ye said:

... يَا مُوسَى لَن نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىَ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ...

"O Moses!

we cannot endure one kind of food (always); so beseech thy Lord for us

... يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنبِتُ الأَرْضُ مِن بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا...

to produce for us of what the earth groweth, its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions."

... قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَى بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ ...

He said: "Will ye exchange the better for the worse?

... اهْبِطُواْ مِصْراً فَإِنَّ لَكُم مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ ...

Go ye down to any town, and ye shall find what ye want!"

C74. The declension of the word **Misr** in the Arabic text here shows that it is treated as a common noun meaning any town, but this is not conclusive, and the reference may be to the Egypt of Pharaoh.

The *Tanwin* expressing indefiniteness may mean "any Egypt", i.e., any country as fertile as Egypt. There is here a subtle reminiscence as well as a severe reproach.

The rebellious children of Israel murmured at the sameness of the food they got in the desert. They were evidently hankering after the delicacies of the Egypt which they had left, although they should have known that the only thing certain for them in Egypt was their bondage and harsh treatment.

Moses' reproach to them was twofold:

1. Such variety of foods you can get in any town;

   would you, for their sake, sell your freedom?

   Is not freedom better than delicate food?

2. In front is the rich Promised Land, which you are reluctant to march to; behind is Egypt, the land of bondage.

   Which is better?

   Would you exchange the better for the worse?

... وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَآؤُوْاْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ...

They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah.

C75. From here the argument becomes more general.

They got the Promised Land. But they continued to rebel against Allah. And their humiliation and misery became a national disaster. They were carried in captivity to Assyria. They were restored under the Persians, but still remained under the Persian yoke, and they were under the yoke of the Greeks, the Romans, and Arabs. They

were scattered all over the earth, and have been a wandering people ever since, because they rejected faith, slew Allah's messengers and went on transgressing.

The slaying of the Prophets begins with the murder of Abel, who was in the ancestry of Israel. The elder sons of Jacob attempted the murder of Joseph when they dropped him into the well, and if he was afterwards rescued by strangers, their blood guilt was none the less. In later history they attempted to slay Jesus, in as much as they got the Roman Governor to crucify one in his likeness, and they attempted to take the life of Mustafa.

But the moral goes wider than the Children of Israel. It applies to all nations and all individuals. If they are stiffed-necked, if they set a greater value on perishable goods than on freedom and eternal salvation, if they break the law of Allah and resist His grace, their portion must be humiliation and misery in the spiritual world and probably even on this earth if a long view is taken.

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ...

This because they went on rejecting the signs of Allah and slaying His messengers without just cause.

... ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا وَّكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ (٦١)

This because they rebelled and went on transgressing.

Section 8

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ ...

62. Those who believe (in the Qur'án) and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), and the Christians and the **Sabians**,

C76. Latest researches have revealed a small remnant of a religious community numbering about 2,000 souls in Lower Iraq, near Basra.

In Arabic they are called Subbi (plural Subba). They are also called Sabians and Nasoraeans; or Mandaeans, or Christians of St. John.

They claim to be Gnostics, of Knowers of the Great Life. They dress in white, and believe in frequent immersions in water. Their Book Ginza is in a dialect of Aramaic. They have theories of Darkness and Light as in Zoroastrianism. They use the name Yardan (Jordan) for any river. They live in peace and harmony among their Muslim neighbors. They resemble the Sabi'un mentioned in the Quran but are not probably identical with them.

The pseudo-Sabians of Harran, who attracted the attention of Khalifah Ma'mun al Rashid in 830 A.C. by their long hair and peculiar dress probably adopted the name as it was mentioned in the Quran, in order to claim the privileges of the People of the Book. They were Syrian Star-worshippers with Hellenistic tendencies, like the Jews contemporary with Jesus.

There was another people called the Sabaens, who played an important part in the history of early Arabia, and are known through their inscriptions in an alphabet allied to the Phoenician and Babylonian. They had a flourishing kingdom in the Yemen tract in South Arabia about 800-700 B.C., though their origin may have been in North Arabia. They worshipped the planets and stars (Moon, Sun, Venus). Probably the Queen of Sheba is connected with them. They succumbed to Abyssinia about 350 A.C. and to Persia about 579 A.C. Their capital was near San'a. They had beautiful stone buildings, in which the pointed arch is noticeable.

Cf. 5:69 and n. 779.

(See Encyclopedia Britannica, on Sabaeans). (R).

... مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحاً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ...

and who believe in Allah and the last day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord;

... وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦٢)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

C77. CF. 2:38, where the same phrase occurs. And it recurs again and again afterwards.

The point of the verse is that Islam does not teach an exclusive doctrine, and is not meant exclusively for one people. The Jews claimed this for themselves, and the Christians in their own origin were a sect of the Jews.

Even the modern organized Christian churches, though they have been, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by the Time-spirit, including the historical fact of Islam, yet cling to the idea of Vicarious Atonement, which means that all who do not believe in it or who lived previously to the death of Christ are at a disadvantage spiritually before the Throne of Allah.

The attitude of Islam is entirely different. Islam existed before the preaching of Muhammad on this earth: the Quran expressly calls Abraham a Muslim (3:67). Its teaching (submission to Allah's will) has been and will be the teaching of Religion for all time and for all peoples.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ ...

63. And remember We took your Covenant and We raised above you (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai)

C78. The Mountain of Sinai (Tur al Sinin) a prominent mountain in the Arabian desert, in the peninsula between the two arms of the Red Sea.

Here the Ten Commandments and the Law were given to Moses. Hence it is now called the Mountain of Moses (Jabal Musa).

The Israelites encamped at the foot of it for nearly a year. The Covenant was taken from them under many portents (Exod. 19:5,8,16,18), which are described in Jewish tradition in great detail.

Under thunder and lightening the mountain must indeed have appeared an awe-inspiring sight above to the Camp at its foot. And the people solemnly entered into the Covenant: all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

... خُذُواْ مَا آتَيْنَاكُم بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُواْ مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (٦٣)

(saying): "Hold firmly to what We have given you and bring (ever) to remembrance what is therein, perchance ye may fear Allah."

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ...

64. But ye turned back thereafter,

... فَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنتُم مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٦٤)

had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of Allah to you, ye had surely been among the lost.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَواْ مِنكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ ...

65. And well ye knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath;

... فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُواْ قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ (٦٥)

We said to them: "Be ye apes, despised and rejected."

C79. The punishment for breach of the Sabbath under the Mosaic law was death.

> "Every one that defieth it (the Sabbath) shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people." (Exod. 31:14).

There must have been a Jewish tradition about a whole fishing community in a seaside town, which persisted in breaking the Sabbath and were turned into apes;

Cf. 7:163-166.

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالاً لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٦٦)

66. So We made it an example to their own time, and to their posterity, and a lesson to those who fear Allah.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُواْ بَقَرَةً ...

67. And remember Moses said to his people: "Allah commands that ye sacrifice a heifer."

C80. This story or parable of the heifer in 2:67-71 should be read with the parable of the dead man brought to life in 2:72-73.

The stories were accepted in Jewish traditions, which are themselves based on certain sacrificial directions in the Old Testament. The heifer story of Jewish tradition is based on Num. 19:1-10, in which Moses and Aaron ordered the Israelites to sacrifice a red heifer without spot or blemish; her body was to be burnt and the ashes were to be kept for the purification of the congregation from sin.

The parable of the dead man we shall refer to later.

The lesson of the heifer parable is plain. Moses announced the sacrifice to the Israelites, and they treated it as jest. When Moses continued solemnly to ask for the sacrifice, they put him off on one pretext and another, asking a number of questions which they could have answered themselves if they had listened to Moses' directions.

Their questions were carping criticisms rather than the result of a desire for information. It was a mere thin presence that they were genuinely seeking for guidance. When at last they were driven into a corner, they made the sacrifice, but the will was wanting, which would have made the sacrifice efficacious for purification from sin.

The real reason for their prevarications was their guilty conscience, as we see in the parable of the dead man (2:72-73).

... قَالُواْ أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُواً...

They said: "Makest thou a laughing-stock of us?"

... قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (٦٧)

He said: "Allah save me from being an ignorant (fool)!"

... قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِيَ

68. They said: "Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what (heifer) it is!

... قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لاَّ فَارِضٌ وَلاَ بِكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ...

He said: "He says: The heifer should be neither too old nor too young, but of middling age;

... فَافْعَلُواْ مَا تُؤْمَرونَ (٦٨)

now do what ye are commanded!

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا...

69. They said: "Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us her color."

... قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاء فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّاظِرِينَ (٦٩)

He said: "He says, a fawn-colored heifer, pure and rich in tone, the admiration of beholders!"

قَالُواْ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّن لَّنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ البَقَرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا...

70. They said, "Beseech on our behalf thy Lord to make plain to us what she is, to us are all heifers alike;

... وَإِنَّآ إِن شَاء اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ (٧٠)

we wish indeed for guidance, if Allah wills."

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لاَّ ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الأَرْضَ وَلاَ تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ...

71. He said: "He says, a heifer not trained to till the soil or water the fields;

... مُسَلَّمَةٌ لاَّ شِيَةَ فِيهَا...

sound and without blemish."

... قَالُواْ الآنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ ...

They said: "Now hast thou brought the truth."

... فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُواْ يَفْعَلُونَ (٧١)

Then they offered her in sacrifice, but not with goodwill.

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْساً فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا ...

72. Remember ye slew a man and fell into a dispute among yourselves as to the crime,

C81. In Deut. 21:1-9 it is ordained that if the body of a slain man be found in field and the slayer is not known, a heifer shall be beheaded, and the elders of the city next to the slain man's domicile shall wash their hands over the heifer and say that they neither did the deed nor saw it done, thus clearing themselves from the blood-guilt.

The Jewish story based on this was that in a certain case of this kind, every one tried to clear himself of guilt and lay the blame at the door of others. In the first place they tried to prevaricate and prevent a heifer being slain as in the last parable. When she was slain, Allah by a miracle disclosed the real person. A portion of the sacrificed heifer was ordered to be placed on the corpse, which came to life and disclosed the whole story of the crime.

The lesson of this parable is that men may try to hide their crimes individually or collectively, but Allah will bring them to light in unexpected ways.

Applying this further to Jewish national history, the argument is developed in the following verses that the Children of Israel played fast and loose which their rites and tradition, but they could thus evade the consequences of their own sin.

... وَاللّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ (٧٢)

but Allah was to bring forth what ye did hide.

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا...

73. So We said: "Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer)."

... كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٧٣)

Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His Signs, perchance ye may understand.

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً...

74. Thenceforth were your hearts hardened; they became like a rock and even worse in hardness.

... وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الأَنْهَارُ...

For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth;

... وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاء...

others there are which when split asunder send forth water;

... وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّهِ...

and others which sink for fear of Allah.

... وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٧٤)

And Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

C82. The sinner's heart gets harder and harder. It is even harder than rocks, of which a beautiful poetical allegory is placed before us.

In nature we think there is nothing harder than rocks. But there are rocks that weep voluntarily, like repentant hearts that come to Allah of their own accord; such are the rocks from which rivers and springs flow spontaneously, sometimes in small trickles, sometimes in big volumes.

Then there are rocks which have to be split or dug into or blown up with dynamite, and underneath we find abundant waters, as in wells beneath rocky soil. Such are the hearts of a less degree of fineness, which yet melt into tears when some great blow or calamity calls the mind to higher things. (R).

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلاَمَ اللّهِ...

75. Can ye (O ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you?

Seeing that a party of them heard the word of Allah,

... ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٥)

and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا...

76. Behold! when they meet the men of Faith, they say: "We believe,"

C83. The immediate argument applies to the Jews of Madinah, but the more general argument applies to the people of Faith and the people without Faith, as we shall see below.

If the Muslims of Madinah ever entertained the hope that the Jews in their city would as a body welcome Muhammad Mustafa as the Prophet prophesied in their own books, they were mistaken. In Deut. 18:18, they read:

"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee." (i.e., like unto Moses) which was interpreted by some of their doctors as referring to Muhammad, and they came into Islam.

The Arabs are a kindred branch of the Semitic family, and are correctly described in relation to the Jews as "their brethren"; and there is no question that there was not another Prophet" like unto Moses" until Muhammad came; in fact the PostScript of Deuteronomy, which was written many centuries after Moses, says:

> "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

But the Jews as a body were jealous of Muhammad, and played a double part. When the Muslim community began to grow stronger they pretended to be of them, but really tried to keep back any knowledge of their own Scriptures from them, lest they should be beaten by their own arguments.

The more general interpretation holds good in all ages. Faith and Unfaith are pitted against each other.

Faith has to struggle against power, position, organization, and privilege. When in gains ground, Unfaith comes forward insincerely and claims fellowship.

But in its own mind it is jealous of armory of science, and knowledge which Faith brings into the service of Allah. But Allah knows all, and if the people of Faith will only seek knowledge sincerely wherever they can find it- even as far afield as China, as Muhammad said, they can defeat Unfaith on its own ground.

[Even though the directive that Muslims should derive knowledge regardless of its location is an acceptable proposition from the Islamic viewpoint, the tradition to which the author refers here is not authentic. (Eds).].

... وَإِذَا خَلاَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىَ بَعْضٍ قَالُواْ أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُم بِمَا فَتَحَ اللّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ...

but when they meet each other in private, they say: "Shall you tell them what Allah hath revealed to you,

... لِيُحَآجُّوكُم بِهِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (٧٦)

that they may engage you in argument about it before your Lord?" Do ye not understand (their aim)?

أَوَلاَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٧٧)

77. Know they not that Allah knoweth what they conceal and what they reveal?

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ ...

78. And there are among them illiterates,

C84. The argument of 2:76 is continued. The Jews wanted to keep back knowledge, but what knowledge had they?

Many of them, even if they could read, were no better than illiterates, for they knew not their own true Scriptures, but read into them what they wanted, or at best their own conjectures.

They planned off their own writings for the Message of Allah. Perhaps it brought them profit for the time being; but it was a miserable profit if they "gained the whole world and lost their own souls" (Matt. 16:26).

"Writing with their own hands" means inventing books themselves, which had no divine authority.

... لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ أَمَانِيَّ ...

who know not the Book but (see therein their own) desires,

... وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَظُنُّونَ (٧٨)

and they do nothing but conjecture.

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ...

79. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands

... ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَـذَا مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ لِيَشْتَرُواْ بِهِ ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً ...

and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for a miserable price!

فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُمْ مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ (٧٩)

Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby.

وَقَالُواْ لَن تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلاَّ أَيَّاماً مَّعْدُودَةً ...

80. And they say: "The fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days;"

C85. The Jews in their arrogance might say:

> Whatever the terror of Hell may be for other people, our sins will be forgiven, because we are the children of Abraham; at worst, we shall suffer a short definite punishment and then be restored to the "bosom of Abraham".

This bubble is pricked here.

Read this verse with 2:81-82.

The general application is also clear. If Unfaith claims some special prerogative, such as race, "civilization," political power, historical experience, and so on, these will not avail in Allah's sight. His promise is sure, but His promise is for those who seek Allah in Faith, and show it in their conduct.

... قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِندَ اللّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَن يُخْلِفَ اللّهُ عَهْدَهُ ...

Say: "Have ye taken a promise from Allah for He never breaks His promise?

... أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨٠)

Or is it that ye say of Allah what ye do not know?"

... بَلَى مَن كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيـئَتُهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ

81. Nay, those who seek gain in Evil, and are girt round by their sins, they are Companions of the Fire,

C86. This is many degrees worse than merely falling into evil: it is going out to "earn evil" as the Arabic text has it, i.e., to seek gain in evil.

Such a perverse attitude means that the moral and spiritual fortress erected around us by the Grace of Allah is voluntarily surrendered by us and demolished by Evil, which erects its own fortress, so that access to Good may be more and more difficult.

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٨١)

therein shall they abide (for ever).

... وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ

82. But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are Companions of the Garden,

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٨٢)

therein shall they abide (for ever).

Section 10

...وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لاَ تَعْبُدُونَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ

83. And remember We took a Covenant from the children of Israel (to this effect): worship none but Allah;

C87. So far from the Covenant being of the kind you suggest in 2:80 the real Covenant is about the moral law, which is set out in 2:83.

This moral law is universal and if you break it no privileges will lighten your punishment or help you in any way (2:86).

"Speak fair to the people" not only means outward courtesy from the leaders to the meanest among the people, but the protection of the people from being exploited, deceived, defrauded, or doped with things to lull their intelligence.

... وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَاناً وَذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ...

treat with kindness your parents and kindred, and orphans and those in need;

... وَقُولُواْ لِلنَّاسِ حُسْناً وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ...

speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer; and practice regular charity.

... ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّنكُمْ وَأَنتُم مِّعْرِضُونَ (٨٣)

Then did ye turn back, except a few among you, and ye backslide (even now).

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لاَ تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءكُمْ وَلاَ تُخْرِجُونَ أَنفُسَكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ...

84. And remember We took your Covenant (to this effect): shed no blood amongst you, nor turn out your own people from your homes;

C88. Verse 83 referred to the universal moral law.

This verse 84 refers to its application under a special Covenant entered into with the Jews of Madinah by the new-born Muslim Commonwealth under its Guide and teacher Muhammad.

This Covenant is given in Ibn Hisham's Sirat-ur-Rasul, and comments on it will be found in Ameer Ali's Spirit of Islam (London 1922), pp. 57-61.

It was entered into in the second year of the Hijrah, and was treacherously broken by the Jews almost immediately afterwards.

... ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ (٨٤)

and this ye solemnly ratified, and to this ye can bear witness.

ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ هَـؤُلاء تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقاً مِّنكُم مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ ...

85. After this it is ye, the same people, who slay among yourselves, and banish a party of you from their homes;

... تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ...

assist (their enemies) against them, in guilt and rancor;

... وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسَارَى تُفَادُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ ...

and if they come to you as captives, ye ransom them, though it was not lawful for you to banish them.

C89. I understand **"ransom them"** here to mean "take ransom for them" though most of the Commentators take it to mean "give ransom for them".

Mustafa had made a Pact which, if it had been faithfully observed by all parties, would have brought a reign of law and order for Madinah. But some of the treacherous Jews never intended to observe its terms. They fought and slew each other and not only banished those who were obnoxious to them but intrigued with their enemies. If by chance they came back into their hands as captives, they demanded ransom for them to return to their homes although they had no right to banish them at all.

If we understand by "ransom them" pay "ransom for them to release them from the hands of their enemies," it would mean that they did this pious act for show, although they were themselves the authors of their unlawful banishment.

I think the former makes better sense.

... أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ...

Then is it only a part of the Book that ye believe in, and do ye reject the rest?

... فَمَا جَزَاء مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنكُمْ إِلاَّ خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life?

... وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ...

and on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty.

... وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٨٥)

For Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

... أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالآخِرَةِ ...

86. These are the people who buy the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter;

... فَلاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٨٦)

their penalty shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped.

C.47 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose) (2:87-121)

The people of Moses and the people of Jesus
Were given revelation, but alas!
They played false, with their own lights
And, in their selfishness, made narrow
Allah's universal message. To them
It seemed incredible that His light
Should illumine Arabia and reform
The world. But His ways are wondrous,
And they are clear to those who have Faith

Section 11

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ ...

87. We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Messengers;

... وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ...

We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit.

C90. As to the birth of Jesus, cf. 19:16-34.

Why is he called the "Son of Mary"?

What are his "clear signs"?

What is the "holy spirit" by which he was strengthened?

We reserve to a later state a discussion of the Quranic teaching on these questions.

See 3:62, n. 401.

... أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لاَ تَهْوَى أَنفُسُكُمُ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ ...

Is it that whenever there comes to you a Messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride?

... فَفَرِيقاً كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقاً تَقْتُلُونَ (٨٧)

Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!

C91. Notice the sudden transition from the past tense in "some ye called imposters" to the present tense in "others ye slay."

There is a double significance.

- First, reviewing the long course of Jewish history, we have come to the time of Jesus; they have often given the lie to Allah's Prophets, and even now they are trying to slay Jesus.

- Secondly, extending the review of that history to the time of Muhammad, they are even now trying to take the life of that holy Prophet.

  This would be literally true at the time the words were promulgated to the people. And this transition leads on naturally to the next verse, which refers to the actual conditions before Muhammad in Medina in the second year of the Hijrah.

Section 11-13 (2:87-121) refer to the people of Book generally, Jews and Christians. Even where Moses and

the Law of Sinai are referred to, those traditions are common to both Jews and Christians.

The argument is about the people who ought to have learnt from previous Revelations and welcomed Muhammad's teaching, and yet they both took up an attitude of arrogant rejection.

وَقَالُواْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ...

88. They say, "Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah's word, we need no more)."

C92. The Jews in their arrogance claimed that all wisdom and all knowledge of Allah were enclosed in their hearts. But there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in their philosophy. Their claim was not only arrogance but blasphemy. In reality they were men without Faith.

I take Ghulfun here to be the plural of Ghilafun the wrapping or cover of a book, in which the book is preserved.

As usual, there is much wider meaning. How many people at all times and among all nations close their hearts to any extension of knowledge or spiritual influence because of some little fragment which they have got and which they think is the whole of Allah's Truth?

Such an attitude shows really want of faith and is a blasphemous limitation of Allah's unlimited spiritual gifts to His creatures.

[According to another view the verse refers to the Jewish claim that a covering had been placed over their hearts which prevented them from grasping the message of the Prophet (peace be on him)].

See Ibn Kathir's commentary on the verse.

See also verse 4:155. [Eds].

بَل لَّعَنَهُمُ اللَّه بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلاً مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٨) ...

Nay, Allah's curse is on them for their blasphemy; little is it they believe.

C93. The root **kafara** has many shades of meaning:

1. to deny Allah's goodness, to be ungrateful,
2. to reject Faith, deny His revelation,
3. to blaspheme, to ascribe some limitation or attribute to Allah which is derogatory to His nature.

In a translation, one shade or another must be put forward according to the context, but all are implied.

وَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ...

89. And when there comes to them a Book from Allah, confirming what is with them-

C94. The Jews, who pretended to be so superior to the people without Faith - the Gentiles - should have been the first to recognize the new Truth - or the Truth renewed - which it was Muhammad's mission to bring because it was so similar in form and language to what they had already received.

But they had more arrogance than faith. It is this want of faith that brings on the curse, i.e., deprives us (if we adopt such an attitude) of the blessings of Allah.

Again the lesson applies to a much wider circle than the Jews. We are all apt, in our perverseness, to reject an appeal from our brother even more summarily than one from an outsider. If we have a glimmering of the truth, we are apt to make ourselves impervious to further truth, and thus lose the benefit of Allah's Grace.

... وَكَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ...

although from of old they had prayed for victory against those without faith,

فَلَمَّا جَاءهُم مَّا عَرَفُواْ كَفَرُواْ بِهِ ...

when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognized, they refused to believe in it;

... فَلَعْنَةُ اللّه عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٨٩)

but the curse of Allah is on those without Faith.

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْاْ بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ أَن يَكْفُرُواْ بِمَا أَنَزَلَ اللّهُ...

90. Miserable is the price for which they have sold their souls, in that they deny (the revelation) which Allah has sent down,

... بَغْياً أَن يُنَزِّلُ اللّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ...

in insolent envy that Allah of His Grace should send it to any of His servants He pleases;

C95. Racial arrogance made the Jews averse to the reception of Truth when it came through a servant of Allah, not of their own race.

Again the lesson is wider.

Is that averseness unknown in our own times, and among other races?

Yet how can a race or a people set bounds to Allah's choice?

Allah is the Creator and Cherisher of all races and all worlds.

... فَبَآؤُواْ بِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (٩٠)

thus have they drawn on themselves wrath upon wrath. And humiliating is the punishment of those who reject Faith.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُواْ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ ...

91. When it is said to them: "Believe in what Allah hath sent down,"

... قَالُواْ نُؤْمِنُ بِمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا...

they say, "We believe in what was sent down to us;"

... وَيَكْفُرونَ بِمَا وَرَاءهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ...

yet they reject all besides, even if it be truth confirming what is with them.

قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنبِيَاء اللّهِ مِن قَبْلُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٩١)

Say: "Why then have ye slain the prophets of Allah in times gone by, if ye did indeed believe?"

C96. Even the race argument is often flimsy and hollow pretext.

Did not the Jews reject Prophets of their own race who told them unpleasant truths?

And do not other nations do likewise?

The real trouble is selfishness, narrowness, a mean dislike of anything which runs counter to habits, customs or inclinations.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءكُم مُّوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ...

92. There came to you Moses with clear (Signs); yet ye worshipped the Calf (even) after that,

... وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (٩٢)

and ye did behave wrongfully.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ ...

93. And remember We took your Covenant and We raised above you (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai), (saying):

... خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُم بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا...

"Hold firmly to what We have given you and hearken (to the Law);"

C97. Cf. the introductory words of 2:63 which are the same as the introductory words here but the argument is developed in a different direction in the two places.

In 2:63, after they are reminded of the solemn Covenant under the towering height of Mount Sinai they are told how they broke the Covenant in after ages.

Here, after they are reminded of the same solemn Covenant, they are told that even then they never meant to observe it. Their thought is expressed in biting words of sarcasm.

They said in words:

"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do"

But they said in their hearts "We shall disobey".

... قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا ...

they said: "We hear, and we disobey;"

C98. What they should have said was: "We hear and we obey" this is the attitude of the true men of Faith (2:285).

... وَأُشْرِبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ...

and they had to **drink** into their hearts (of the taint) of the calf because of their faithlessness.

C99. After the Commandments and the Law had been given at Mount Sinai, and the people had solemnly given their Covenant, Moses went up to the Mount, and in his absence, the people made the golden calf.

[The word **ushribu** which occurs in the verse seems to suggest, as noted Tabi'i Qatadaqh is reported to have said, that their hearts were saturated with the love for the calf.

See Ibn Kathir's Commentary on the verse. (Eds).]

... قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٩٣)

Say: "Vile indeed are the behests of your faith if ye have any faith!"

قُلْ إِن كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِندَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّن دُونِ النَّاسِ...

94. Say: "If the last Home, with Allah, be for you specially, and not for anyone else,

... فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٩٤)

then seek ye for death, if ye are sincere."

وَلَن يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ...

95. But they will never seek for death, on account of the (sins) which their hands have sent on before them.

C100. The phrase "What their hands have sent on before them" frequently occurs in the Quran.

Here, and in many places, it refers to sins.

In such passages as 78:40, or 81:14, it is implied that both good and bad deeds go before us to the Judgement seat of Allah before we do ourselves.

In 2:110, it is the good that goes before us.

Our deeds are personified. They are witnesses for or against us, and they always go before us. Their good or bad influence to operate before we even know it.

This is more general than the New Testament idea in the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, 5:24: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after."

... وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٩٥)

And Allah is well acquainted with the wrongdoers.

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا...

96. Thou wilt indeed find them, of all people, most greedy of life, even more than the idolaters;

... يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحْزِحِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَن يُعَمَّرَ...

each one of them wishes he could be given a life of a thousand years; but the grant of such life will not save him from (due) punishment,

... وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦)

for Allah sees well all that they do.

Section 12

قُلْ مَن كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللّٰهِ...

97. Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel, for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will,

C101. A party of the Jews in the time of Muhammad ridiculed the Muslim believe that Gabriel brought down revelations to Muhammad Mustafa.

Michael was called in their books "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people": (Daniel 12:1). The vision of Gabriel inspired fear (Daniel, 8:16-17).

But this pretence - that Michael was their friend and Gabriel their enemy - was merely a manifestation of their unbelief in angels, apostles, and Allah Himself; and such unbelief could not win the love of Allah.

In any case it was disingenuous to say that they believed in one angel and not in another.

Muhammad's inspiration was through visions of Gabriel. Muhammad had been helped to the highest spiritual light, and the message which he delivered and his spotless integrity and exemplary life were manifest Signs which every one could understand except those who were obstinate and perverse. Besides, the verses of the Quran were in themselves reasonable and clear.

... مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٩٧)

a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe.

... مَن كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّلّهِ وَمَلآئِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ

98. Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and apostles, to Gabriel and Michael,

... فَإِنَّ اللّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٩٨)

Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject faith.

وَلَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلاَّ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٩٩)

99. We have sent down to thee manifest signs (Ayat);

and none reject them but those who are perverse.

... أَوَكُلَّمَا عَاهَدُواْ عَهْداً نَّبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم

100. Is it not (the case) that every time they make a Covenant, some party among them throw it aside?-

... بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠٠)

Nay, most of them are faithless.

... وَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ

101. And when came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming what was with them,

نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ ...

a party of the People of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs,

C102. I think that by **"the Book of Allah"** here is meant, not the Quran, but the Book which the People of the Book had been given, viz., the previous Revelations.

The argument is that Muhammad's Message was similar to Revelations which they had already received, and if they had looked into their own Books honestly and sincerely, they would have found proofs in them to show that the new Message was true and from Allah. But they ignored their own Books or twisted or distorted them according to their own fancies. Worse, they followed somethings which was actually false and mischievous and inspired by the evil one. Such was the belief in magic and sorcery.

These are described in the next verse in terms referring to the beliefs and practices of the "People of the Book."

كَأَنَّهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠١) ...

as if (it had been something) they did not know!

وَاتَّبَعُواْ مَا تَتْلُواْ الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَى مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ...

102. They followed what the evil ones gave out (falsely) against the power of Solomon;

C103. This is a continuation of the argument in 2:101.

The People of the Book, instead of sticking to the plain Books of Revelations, and seeking to do the will of Allah ran after all sorts of occult knowledge, most of which was false and evil.

Many wonderful tales of occult power attributed the power of Solomon to magic. But Solomon dealt in not arts of evil. It was the powers of evil that pretended to force the laws of nature and the will of Allah; such a pretense is plainly blasphemy.

... وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَـكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُواْ يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ...

the blasphemers were, not Solomon, but the evil ones, teaching men magic,

... وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ...

and such things as came down at Babylon to the angels Harut and Marut.

C104. Harut and **Marut** lived in Babylon, a very ancient seat of science, especially the science of astronomy. The period may be supposed to anywhere about the time when the ancient Eastern Monarchies were strong and enlightened: probably even earlier, as Ma-ru-tu or Mandruk was a deified hero afterwards worshipped as a god of magic in Babylon.

Being good men, Harut and Marut of course dabbled in nothing evil, and their evil hands were certainly clean of fraud. But knowledge and the arts, if learned by evil men, can be applied to evil uses. The evil ones, besides their fraudulent magic, also learnt a little of this true science and applied it to evil uses.

Harut and Marut did not withhold knowledge, yet never taught anyone without plainly warning them of the trial and temptation of knowledge in the hands of evil men. Being men of insight, they also saw the blasphemy that might rise to the lips of the evil ones puffed up with science and warned them against it.

Knowledge is indeed a trial or temptation: if we are warned, we know its dangers: if Allah has endowed us with free will, we must be free to choose between the benefit and the danger.

Among the Jewish traditions in the Midrash (Jewish Tafsir) was a story of two angels who asked Allah's permission to come down to earth but succumbed to temptation, and were hung up by their feet at Babylon for punishment.

Such stories about sinning angels who were cast down to punishment were believed in by the early Christians also. (See the Second Epistle of Peter, 2:4, and the Epistle of Jude, verse 6). (R).

... وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولاَ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلاَ تَكْفُرْ ...

But neither of these taught anyone (such things) without saying: "We are only for trial, so do not blaspheme."

... فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ...

They learned from them the means to sow discord between man and wife.

C105. What the evil ones learnt from Harut and Marut (see last note) they turned to evil. When mixed with fraud and deception, it appeared as charms and spells of love potions. They did nothing but cause discord between the sexes. But of course their power was limited to the extent to which Allah permitted the evil to work, for His grace protected all who sought His guidance and repented and returned to Him.

But apart from the harm that these false pretenders might do to others, the chief harm which they did was to their own souls. They sold themselves into slavery to the Evil One, as is shown in the allegory of Goethe's Faust.

That allegory dealt with the individual soul. Here the tragedy is shown to occur not only to individuals but to whole groups of people, for example, the People of the Book.

Indeed the story might be extended indefinitely.

... وَمَا هُم بِضَآرِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ...

But they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's permission.

... وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلاَ يَنفَعُهُمْ ...

And they learned what harmed them, not what profited them.

... وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُواْ لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلاَقٍ ...

And they knew that the buyers of (magic) would have no share in the happiness of the Hereafter.

... وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْاْ بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُواْ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠٢)

And vile was the price for which they did sell their souls, if they but knew!

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُواْ واتَّقَوْاْ لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّوْ كَانُواْ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠٣)

103. If they had kept their faith and guarded themselves from evil, far better had been the reward from their Lord, if they but knew!

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَقُولُواْ رَاعِنَا وَقُولُواْ انظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُواْ...

104. O ye of Faith! say not (to the Prophet) words of ambiguous import, but words of respect; and hearken (to him);

C106. The word disapproved is **Raina**, which is used by the Muslims meant "Please look at us, attend to us."

But it was ridiculed by enemies by a little twist to suggest some insulting meaning. So an unambiguous word **"Unzurna,"** with the same meaning is suggested.

The general lesson is that we must guard ourselves against the cynical trick of using words which should complimentary to the ear but have a hidden barb in them. Not only must we be plain and honest in our words. We must respectfully hearken to the words of a Teacher whom we have addressed. Thoughtless people use vain words or put foolish questions, and straightaway turn their minds to something else.

... وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٠٤)

to those without faith is a grievous punishment.

مَّا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلاَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ...

105. It is never the wish of those without faith among the People of the Book, nor of the Pagans,

... أَن يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَاللّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاء...

that anything good should come down to you from your Lord. But Allah will choose for His special Mercy whom He will,

... وَاللّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (١٠٥)

for Allah is Lord of grace abounding.

مَا نَنسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلِهَا...

106. None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar;

C107. The word which I have translated by the word "revelations" is **Ayat**. See C.41 and n. 15.

It is not only used for verses of the Quran, but in a general sense for Allah's revelations, as in 2:39 and for other Signs of Allah in history or nature, or miracles, as in 2:61.

It has even been used for human signs and tokens of wonder, as, for example, monuments or landmarks built by the ancient people of 'Ad (26:128).

What is the meaning here?

If we take it in a general sense, it means that Allah's Message from age to age is always the same, but that its form may differ according to the needs and exigencies of the time. That form was different as given to Moses and then to Jesus and then to Muhammad.

Some commentators apply it also to The Ayat of the Quran. There is nothing derogatory in this if we believe in progressive revelation. In 3:7 we are told distinctly about the Quran, that some of its versus are clear (and of established meaning), and others are not entirely clear, and it is mischievous to treat the verses that are not entirely clear and to follow them (literally). On the other hand, it is absurd to treat such a verse as 2:115 as if it were abrogated by 2:144 about the Qiblah.

There may be express abrogation, or there may be "causing or permitting to forget."

How many good and wise institutions gradually become obsolete by afflux of time?

Then there is gradual process of disuse or forgetting in evolution. This does not mean that eternal principles change. It is only a sign of Allah's infinite Power that His creation should take so many forms and shapes not only in the material world but in the world of man's thought and expression.

... أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٠٦)

knowest thou not that Allah hath power over all things?

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

107. Knowest thou not that to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth!

... وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ نَصِيرٍ (١٠٧)

And besides Him ye have neither patron nor helper.

أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَن تَسْأَلُواْ رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَى مِن قَبْلُ...

108. Would ye question your Messenger as Moses was questioned of old?

C108. Moses was constantly harassed with foolish, impertinent, or disingenuous questions by his own people. We must not follow that bad example.

In spiritual matters, posers to no good: questions should be asked only for real instruction.

... وَمَن يَتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاء السَّبِيلِ (١٠٨)

But whoever changeth from faith to unbelief, hath strayed without doubt from the even way.

C109. "Even way": the Arabic word **sawaa** signifies;

- smoothness as opposed to roughness:
- symmetry as opposed to want of plan;
- equality or proportion as opposed to want of design;
- rectitude as opposed to crookedness;
- a mean as opposed to extremes; and
- fitness for the object held in view as opposed to faultiness.

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُم مِّن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّاراً...

109. Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed,

... حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِندِ أَنفُسِهِم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ...

from selfish envy, after the truth hath become manifest unto them;

... فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا ...

but forgive and overlook,

C110. Three words are used in the Quran, with a meaning akin to "forgive" but each with a different shade of meaning.

- **Afa** (here translated "forgive") means to forget, to obliterate from one's mind.
- **Safaha** (here translated "overlook") means to turn away from, to ignore, to treat a matter as if it did not affect one.
- Gafara (which does not occur in this verse) means to cover up something as Allah does to our sins with His grace;

  this word is particularly appropriate in Allah's attribute of Gaffar, the One who forgives again and again.

... حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللّٰهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ...

till Allah accomplish His purpose;

C111. The word **Amr** is comprehensive and includes;

- an order or command as in 96:12; or
- a purpose, design, will as in 18:82; or
- affairs, working doing, carrying out or execution of a design, as in 79:5.

In many cases some of these meanings run together.

... إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٠٩)

for Allah hath power over all things.

C112. Not how this phrase, seemingly repeated from 2:106, and occurring in many other places, has an appropriate signification in each place.

In 2:106 we were told about progressive revelation, how the same thing may take different forms and seeming

human infirmity contribute to the fulfillment of Allah's design, for Allah's power is unlimited.

Here we are told to be patient and forgiving against envy and injustice: this too may be fulfilling Allah's purpose, for His power is infinite.

... وَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتُواْ الزَّكَاةَ

110. And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity:

... وَمَا تُقَدِّمُواْ لأَنفُسِكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِندَ اللّهِ ...

and whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah;

C113. Cf. 2:95, n.100.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١٠)

for Allah sees well all that ye do.

وَقَالُواْ لَن يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلاَّ مَن كَانَ هُوداً أَوْ نَصَارَى...

111. And they say: "None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian."

... تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ...

Those are their (vain) desires.

... قُلْ هَاتُواْ بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١١١)

Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful."

... بَلَى مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِندَ رَبِّهِ

112. Nay, whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward with his Lord;

C114. The word translated "self" is **Wajh**, a comprehensive Arabic word. It means;

1. literally "face" but it may imply;
2. countenance or favour, as in 92:20;

3. honour, glory, Presence as applied to Allah, as in 2:115 and perhaps also in 55:27;

4. cause, sake ("for the sake of") as in 76:9;

5. the first part, the beginning as in 3:72;

6. nature, inner being, essence, self, as in 28:88, and perhaps also in 55:27.

Here I understand meaning 6; the face expresses the personality or the whole inner self of man. (R).

... وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (١١٢)

on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

C115. This phrase comes in aptly in its own context many times.

In this Surah it occurs in 11. 38, 62, 112, 262, 274, and 277. (R).

Section 14

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصَارَى عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ...

113. The Jews say: "The Christians have naught (to stand) upon;"

... وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ...

and the Christians say: "The Jews have naught (to stand) upon." Yet they (profess to) study the (same) Book.

... كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ...

Like unto their word is what those say who know not,

C116. It is a sure sign of ignorance and prejudice when you study the same book as another or a similar one and yet are absolutely intolerant of the meaning which the other draws from it.

You should know better, but you speak like the ignorant. In this case the primary reference in the word "ignorant" may be to the Pagan Arabs.

... فَاللّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُواْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١١٣)

but Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment.

... وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسَاجِدَ اللّهِ أن يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ

114. And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship of Allah, Allah's name should be celebrated? -

C117. There were actually Pagans in Makkah who tried to shut out the Muslim Arabs from the Ka'bah, the universal place of Arab worship.

The Pagans themselves called it the House of Allah. With what face could they exclude the Muslims, who wanted to worship the true Allah instead of worshipping idols?

If these Pagans had succeeded, they would only have caused violent divisions among the Arabs and destroyed the sanctity and the very existence of the Ka'bah.

This verse taken in a general sense, establishes the principle of freedom of worship in a public mosque or place dedicated to the worship of Allah. This is recognised in Muslim law. (R).

... وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا...

Whose zeal is (in fact) to ruin them?

أُوْلَـئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَن يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلاَّ خَآئِفِينَ...

It was not fitting that such should themselves enter them except in fear.

... لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١١٤)

For them there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, an exceeding torment.

وَلِلّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّواْ فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّهِ ...

115. To Allah belong the East and the West; whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance.

C118. That is, you will face Allah whichever direction you turn your face.

See note to 2:112 above. (R)

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١١٥)

For Allah is All-Embracing,, All-Knowing.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ ...

116. They say: "Allah hath begotten a son;" Glory be to Him.

... بَل لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ (١١٦)

Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth; everything renders worship to Him.

C119. It is a derogation from the glory of Allah - in fact it is blasphemy - to say that Allah begets sons, like a man or an animal.

The Christian doctrine is here emphatically repudiated. If words have any meaning, it would mean an attribution of Allah of a material nature, and of the lower animal functions of sex. (R)

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

117. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth;

C120. The previous verse told us that everything in heaven and earth celebrates the glory of Allah. Lest anyone should think that the heavens and the earth were themselves primeval and eternal, we are now told that they themselves are creatures of Allah's will and design.

Cf. 6:101, where the word **bada'a** is used as here for the creation of the heavens and the earth, and khalaqa is used for the creation of all things.

Bada'a goes back to the very primal beginning, as far as we can conceive it.

The materialists might say that primeval matter was eternal; other things, i.e., the forms and shapes as we see them now, were called into being at some time or other, and will perish. When they perish, they dissolve into primeval matter again, which stands as the base of all existence.

We go further back. We say that if we postulate such primeval matter, it owes its origin itself to Allah Who is the final basis of existence, the Cause of all Causes. If this is conceded, we proceed to argue that the process of Creation is not then completed.

"All things in the heavens and on the earth" are created by gradual processes. In "things" we include abstract as well as material things. We see the abstract things and ideas actually growing before us.

But that also is Allah's creation, to which we can apply the word khalaqa, for in it is involved the idea of measuring, fitting it into a scheme of other things. Cf. 54:49; also 25:59.

Here comes in what we know as the process of evolution. On the other hand, the "amr" (Command, Direction, Design) is a single thing, unrelated to Time, "like the twinkling of an eye" (54:50).

Another word to note in this connection is ja'ala "making" which seems to imply new shapes and forms, new dispositions, as the making of the Signs of the Zodiac in the heavens, or the setting out of the sun and moon for light, or the establishment of the succession of day and night (25:61-62).

A further process with regard to the soul is described in the word sawwa, bringing it to perfection (91:7) but this we shall discuss in its place.

Fatara (42:11) implies, like bada'a, the creating of a thing out of nothing and after no preexisting similitude, but perhaps fatara implies the creation of primeval matter to which further processes have to be applied later, as when one prepares dough but leaves the leavening to be done after.

Badaa (without the 'ain), 30:27, implies beginning the process of creation; this is made further clear in 32:7 where the beginning of the creation of pristine man from clay refers to his physical body, leaving the further processes of reproduction and the breathing in of the soul to be described in subsequent verses.

Lastly, bara'a is creation implying liberation from pre-existing matter or circumstance, e.g., man's body from clay (59:24) or a calamity from previously existing circumstances (57:22).

See also 6:94, n. 916; 6:98, n. 923; 59:24, notes. 5405-6.

... وَإِذَا قَضَى أَمْراً فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ (١١٧)

when He decreeth a matter He saith to it: "Be;"

and it is.

... وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلاَ يُكَلِّمُنَا اللّهُ

118. Say those without knowledge:

"Why speaketh not Allah unto Us?

... أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ ...

Or why cometh not unto us a sign?"

... كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

So said the people before them, words of similar import. Their hearts are alike.

... قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (١١٨)

We have indeed made clear the signs unto any people who hold firmly to faith (in their hearts).

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلاَ تُسْأَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ (١١٩)

119. Verily, We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner.

But of thee no question shall be asked of Companions of the blazing fire.

وَلَن تَرْضَى عَنكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلاَ النَّصَارَى حَتَّى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ...

120. Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion.

قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَى...

Say: "The guidance of Allah, that is the (only) guidance."

... وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءهُم بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ...

Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee,

... مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ نَصِيرٍ (١٢٠)

then wouldst thou find neither protector nor helper against Allah.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلاَوَتِهِ أُوْلَـئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ...

121. Those to whom We have sent the book study it as it should be studied; they are the ones that believe therein;

... وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (١٢١)

those who reject faith therein, the loss is their own.

C.48 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose) (2:122-141)

If the people of the Book rely
Upon Abraham, let them study
His history. His posterity included
Both Israel and Ismail. Abraham
Was a righteous man of Allah,
A Muslim, and so were his children.
Abraham and Ismail built
The Ka'bah as the house of Allah,
And purified it, to be a centre
Of worship for all the world;
For Allah is the God of all peoples.

C 121. The argument now proceeds on another line. Ye People of the Book who go back to Abraham! not only is your claim to exclusive knowledge of Allah false and derogatory to the Lord of All the Worlds. If you must appeal to Abraham, he was also the progenitor of the

Arab race through Ismail. Indeed Abraham and Ismail together built the House of Allah in Makkah (long before the Temple of Jerusalem was built). They purified it and laid the foundation of the universal religion, which is summed up in word Islam, or complete submission to the Will of Allah. Abraham and Ismail were thus true Muslims. Whence then your rancour against Islam?

Historically the House of Allah at Makkah must have been far more ancient place of worship than the Temple of Jerusalem. Arab tradition connects various places in and around Makkah with the name of Abraham and identifies the well of Zamzam with the well in the story of the child Ismail.

Arab tradition also refers the story of the Sacrifice to Ismail and not to Isaac, therein differing from the Jewish tradition in Gen, 22:1-19. (R).

Section 15

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

122. O Children of Israel!

call to mind the special favor which I bestowed upon you,

... وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (١٢٢)

and that I preferred you to all others (for my message).

وَاتَّقُواْ يَوْماً لاَّ تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَن نَّفْسٍ شَيْئاً...

123. Then guard yourselves against a day when one soul shall not avail another,

... وَلاَ يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلاَ تَنفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (١٢٣)

nor shall compensation be accepted from her,

nor shall intercession profit her,

nor shall anyone be helped (from outside).

C122. Verses 122-123 repeat verses 47-48 (except for a slight verbal variation in ii. 123 which does not affect the sense).

The argument about the favours to Israel is thus beautifully rounded off, and we now proceed to the argument in favour of the Arabs as succeeding to the spiritual inheritance of Abraham.

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ...

124. And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord, with certain commands, which he fulfilled;

C123. Kalimat: literally "words" here used in the mystic sense of Allah's Will or Decree or Purpose.

This verse may be taken to be the sum of the verses following. In everything Abraham fulfilled Allah's wish:

- he purified Allah's house;
- he built the sacred refuge of the Ka'bah;
- he submitted his will to Allah's, and thus became the type of Islam.

He was promised the leadership of the world; he pleaded for his progeny, and his prayer was granted, with the limitation that if his progeny was false to Allah, Allah's promise did not reach the people who proved themselves false.

... قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ...

He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the nations."

C124. Imam; the primary sense is that of being foremost: hence it may mean:

1. leader in religion;
2. leader in congregational prayer;
3. model, pattern, example;
4. a book of guidance and instruction (11:17);
5. a book of evidence or record (36:12).

Here, meaning 1 and 3 are implied.

In 9:12 the word is applied to leaders of Unbelief or Blasphemy.

... قَالَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي ...

He pleaded: "And also (Imams) from my offspring!"

... قَالَ لاَ يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ (١٢٤)

He answered: "But my promise is not within the reach of evildoers."

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْناً ...

125. Remember We made the house a place of assembly for men and a place of safety;

C125. The Ka'bah, the House of Allah. Its foundation goes back by Arab tradition to Abraham. Its fourfold character is here referred to:

1. It was the centre to which all the Arab tribes resorted for trade, for poetic contests, and for worship,
2. It was sacred territory and was respected by friend and foe alike. At certain seasons, all fighting was and is forbidden within it limits, and even arms are not allowed to be carried and no game or other thing is allowed to be killed.

   Like the Cities of Refuge under the Mosaic Dispensation to which manslayers could flee (Num. 35:6) or the Sanctuaries in Mediaeval Europe, to which criminals could not be pursued. Makkah was recognized by Arab custom as inviolable for the pursuit of revenge or violence.
3. it was a place of prayer;

   even today there is a Station of Abraham within the enclosure. Where Abraham was supposed to have prayed.
4. It must be held pure and sacred for all purposes.

Though the verse as a whole is expressed in the First Person Plural, the House is called "My House" to emphasize the personal relation of Allah, the One True God, to it, and repudiate the Polytheism which defiled it before it was purified again by Muhammad. (R).

... وَاتَّخِذُواْ مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ...

and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer;

... وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا ...

and We covenanted with Abraham and Isma'il, that they should sanctify

... بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ (١٢٥)

My House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer).

C126. Four rites are here enumerated, which have now acquired a technical meaning.

1. Compassing the sacred territory, or going round the Ka'bah: **Tawaf**.

   There are special guides who take pilgrims and visitors round.

2. Retiring to the place as a spiritual retreat, for contemplation and prayer: **Itikat**.

3. The posture of bending the back in prayer: **Ruku**.

4. The posture of prostrating oneself on the ground in prayer: **Sujud**.

The protection of the holy territory is for all, but special cleanliness and purity is required for the sake of the devotees who undertake these rites. (R).

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَـٰذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا ...

126. And remember Abraham said:

"My Lord, make this a City of Peace,

C127. The root salama in the word Islam implies (among other ideas) the idea of Peace, and therefore when Makkah is the city of Islam, it is also the City of Peace.

The same root occurs in the latter part of the name Jerusalem, the Jewish City of Peace. When the day of Jerusalem passed (see verse 134 or 141 below).

Makkah became the "New Jerusalem" - or rather the old and original "City of Peace" restored and made universal.

... وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُم بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

and feed its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day."

C128. The territory of Makkah is barren and rocky, compared with, say Taif, a city 70-75 miles east of Makkah . A prayer for the prosperity of Makkah therefore includes a prayer for the good things of material life. (R).

... قَالَ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلاً ...

He said: "(Yea), and such as reject faith, for a while will I grant them their pleasure,

... ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَى عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٢٦)

but will soon drive them to the torment of fire, an evil destination (indeed)!"

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا...

127. And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer):

"Our Lord!

accept (this service) from us,

... إِنَّكَ أَنتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٢٧)

for thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ...

128. "Our Lord!

make of us Muslims, bowing to Thy (Will), and of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (Will),

... وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَآ...

and show us our places for the celebration of (due) rites; and turn unto us (in mercy);

... إِنَّكَ أَنتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٢٨)

for Thou art the Oft-Returning, Most-Merciful.

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولاً مِّنْهُمْ ...

129. "Our Lord! send amongst them a Messenger of their own,

... يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ...

who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them;

... إِنَّكَ أَنتَ العَزِيزُ الحَكِيمُ (١٢٩)

for Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

C129. How beautiful this prayer is, and how aptly it comes in here in the argument!

Such Paganism or star-worship or planet-worship as there was in Abraham's time was first cleared out of Makkah by Abraham. This is the chief meaning of "sanctification" or purification in 2:125, although of course physical cleanliness is (in physical conditions) a necessary element of purification in the higher sense.

Abraham and his elder son Ismail then built the Ka'bah and established the rites and usages of the sacred city. He was thus the founder of the original Islam (which is as old as mankind) in Arabia.

As becomes a devout man, he offers and dedicates the work to Allah in humble supplication, addressing Him as the All-Hearing and the All-Knowing. He then asks for a blessing on himself and his progeny generally, both the children of his eldest-born Ismail and his younger son Isaac.

With prophetic vision he foresees that there will be corruption and backsliding in both branches of his family: Makkah will house 360 idols, and Jerusalem will become a harlot city (Ezekiel 16:15), a city of abomination.

But the light of Islam will shine, and reclaim the lost people in both branches and indeed in all the world. So he prays for Allah's mercy, addressing Him as the Oft-Returning Most Merciful.

And finally he foresees in Makkah a Prophet teaching the people as one "of their own", and in their own beautiful Arabic language; he asks for a blessing on Muhammad's ministry, appealing to the Power and Wisdom of Allah.

Section 16

وَمَن يَرْغَبُ عَن مِّلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلاَّ مَن سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ...

130. And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly?

... وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا ...

Him We chose and rendered pure in this world:

C130. Istafa: chose; chose because of purity; chose and purified. It is the same root from which Mustafa is derived, one of the titles of Muhammad.

... وَإِنَّهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٣٠)

and he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the righteous.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ ...

131. Behold! his Lord said to him: "Bow (thy will to me)"

... قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٣١)

He said: "I bow (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the universe."

وَوَصَّى بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ...

132. And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob;

يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلاَ تَمُوتُنَّ إِلاَّ وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (١٣٢)

"O my sons! Allah hath chosen the faith for you; then die not except in the faith of Islam."

أَمْ كُنتُمْ شُهَدَاء إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ ...

133. Were ye witnesses when death appeared before Jacob?

C131. The whole of the Children of Israel are called to witness one of their slogans, that they worshipped "the God of their fathers." The idea in their minds got narrowed down to that of a tribal God. But they are reminded that their ancestors had the principle of Islam in them - the worship of the One True and Universal God.

The death-bed scene is described in Jewish tradition.

... إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي...

Behold, he said to his sons: "What will ye worship after me?"

... قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَـٰهَكَ وَإِلَـٰهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَقَ...

They said: "We shall worship thy God and the God of thy fathers, of Abraham, Isma'il, and Isaac,

C132. "Fathers" means ancestors, and include uncles, grand-uncles, as well as direct ascendants.

... إِلَـٰهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٣٣)

the one (true) God, to Him we bow (in Islam)."

... تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ

134. That was a People that hath passed away.

They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do!

... وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٣٤)

of their merits there is no question in your case!

C133. I have made a free paraphrase of what would read literally:

"Ye shall not be asked about what they used to do."

On the Day of Judgment each soul would have to answer for its own deeds: it cannot claim merit from others, nor be answerable for the crimes or sins of others.

Here the argument is:

if the Jews or Christians claim the merits of Father Abraham and the Patriarchs or of Jesus, we cannot follow

them. Because there were righteous men in the past, it cannot help us unless we are ourselves righteous.

The doctrine of personal responsibility is a cardinal feature of Islam.

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا...

135. They say: "Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (to salvation)."

... قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ...

Say thou:

"Nay!

(I would rather) the religion of Abraham the true,

C134. Hanif: inclined to right opinion, orthodox (in the literal meaning of the Greek words), firm in faith, sound and well-balanced, true.

Perhaps the last word, True, sums up most of the other shades.

The Jews, though taught Unity, went after false gods, and the Christians invented the Trinity or borrowed it from Paganism. We go back to pure, *Hanif* doctrine of Abraham, to live and die in faith in the One True God.

... وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٣٥)

and he joined not gods with Allah."

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا...

136. Say ye:

"We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us,

... وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأَسْبَاطِ ...

and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes,

... وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord,

... لاَ نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٣٦)

we make no difference between one and another of them, and we bow to Allah (in Islam)."

C135. Here we have the Creed of Islam: to believe in:

1. the One Universal God.,
2. the Message to us through Muhammad and the Signs (Ayat) as interpreted on the basis of personal responsibility,
3. the Message delivered by other Teachers in the past.

These are mentioned in three groups:

- Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes:
  of these Abraham had apparently a Book (87:19) and others followed his tradition:
- Moses and Jesus, who each left a scripture; these scriptures are still extant though not in their pristine form; and
- other scriptures, Prophets, or Messengers of Allah, not specifically mentioned in the Quran.

We make no difference between any of these. Their Message (in essentials) was one, and that is the basis of Islam.

فَإِنْ آمَنُواْ بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنتُم بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَواْ وَّإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ...

137. So if they believe as ye believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism;

... فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللّهُ ...

but Allah will suffice thee as against them,

C136. We are thus in the true line of those who follow the one and indivisible Message of the One Allah, wherever delivered.

If others narrow it or corrupt it, it is they who have left the faith and created a division or schism. But Allah sees and knows all. And He will protect His own, and His support will be infinitely more precious than the support which men can give.

... وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٣٧)

and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

... صِبْغَةَ اللّهِ

138. (Our religion is) the baptism of Allah;

C137. Sibghah: baptism: the root-meaning implies a dye or colour;

apparently the Arab Christians mixed a dye or colour in the baptismal water, signifying that the baptized person got a new colour in life.

We do not believe that it is necessary to be baptized to be saved. (Eds).

... وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّهِ صِبْغَةً ...

and who can baptize better than Allah?

... وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدونَ (١٣٨)

and it is He whom we worship.

قُلْ أَتُحَآجُّونَنَا فِي اللّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ...

139. Say:

Will ye dispute with us about Allah, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord;

... وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ...

that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours;

... وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ (١٣٩)

and that we are sincere (in our faith) in Him?

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَـقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ...

140. Or do ye say that Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob

... وَالأَسْبَاطَ كَانُواْ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى ...

and the Tribes were Jews or Christians?

C138. The alternative is with the question in the last verse.

Do you dispute with us although we worship the same God as you and claim that ours is the same religion as that of your ancestors?

Or do you really assert that Abraham and his son and his sons' sons, who founded the Tribes long before Moses, followed your Jewish religion as you know it?

History of course proves that claim absurd. If the Christians claim that these Patriarchs knew of and followed the teaching of Jesus, the claim is still more absurd, - except in the sense of Islam that Allah's teaching is one in all ages.

... قُلْ أَأَنتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللَّهُ ...

Say: Do ye know better than Allah?

... وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِندَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ...

Ah! who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah?

... وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٠)

But Allah is not unmindful of what ye do!

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ...

141. That was a people that hath passed away.

They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and ye of what ye do!

... وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤١)

Of their merits there is no question in your case.

C139. Verse 134 began a certain argument, which is now rounded off in the same words in this verse. To use a musical term, the motif is now completed.

The argument is that it is wrong to claim a monopoly for Allah's Message: it is the same for all peoples and in all ages: if it undergoes local variations or variations according to times and seasons those variations pass away.

This leads to the argument in the remainder of the Surah that with the renewal of the Message and the birth of a new People, a new symbolism and new ordinances become appropriate, and they are now expounded.

C.49 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:142-167)

But those people have passed away,
Who promised to uphold the Law of Allah.
Their progeny having been found
Unworthy, their place was taken
By a new people looking towards Makkah-
A new people, with a new Messenger,
To bear witness to Allah's Law,
To proclaim the truth, maintain
His Symbols, and strive and fight
For Unity in Allah's Way.

Section 17

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاء مِنَ النَّاسِ ...

142. The fools among the people will say:

C140. Nas: People, the unthinking multitude that sway to and fro, instead of being firm in Allah's Way.

The reference here is to the idolaters, the Hypocrites, and the party of Jews who were constantly seeking to "entangle in their talk" Mustafa and his disciples in Madinah even as the Pharisees and the Sadducees of Jesus' day tried to entangle Jesus (Matt. 22:15, 23)

... مَا وَلاَّهُمْ عَن قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُواْ عَلَيْهَا...

"What hath turned them from the Qiblah to which they were used?"

C141. Qiblah: The direction to which Muslims turn in prayer.

Islam lays great stress on social prayer in order to emphasize our universal Brotherhood and mutual cooperation. For such prayer, order, punctuality, precision, symbolical postures, and a common direction are essential, so that the Imam (leader) and all his congregation may face one way and offer their supplications to Allah.

In the early days, before they were organized as a people, they followed as a symbol for their Qiblah the sacred city of Jerusalem, scared both to the Jews and the Christians, the people of the Book. This symbolized their allegiance to the continuity of Allah's revelation.

When, despised and persecuted, they were turned out of Makkah and arrived in Madinah. Al Mustafa under divine direction began to organize its people as an Ummah, an independent people, with laws and rituals of their own. At that stage the Ka'bah was established as Qiblah, thus going back to the earliest centre, with which the name of Abraham was connected, and traditionally also the name of Adam.

Jerusalem still remained (and remains) sacred in the eyes of Islam on account of its past, but Islam is progressive religion, and its new symbolism enabled it to shake off the tradition of a dead past and usher in the era of untrammeled freedom dear to the spirit of Arabia. The change took place about 16 1/2 months after Hijrah.

... قُل لِّلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ...

Say: to Allah belong both East and West;

... يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (١٤٢)

He guideth whom He will to a Way that is straight.

... وَكَذَلِكَ

143. Thus

C142. Thus: By giving you a Qiblah of your own, most ancient in history, and most modern as a symbol of your organisation as a new nation (Ummah).

... جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا ...

have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced,

C143. Justly balanced: The essence of Islam is to avoid all extravagances on either side. It is a sober, practical religion.

But the Arabic word (wasat) also implies a touch of the literal meaning of Intermediacy. Geographically Arabia is in an intermediate position in the Old World, as was proved in history by the rapid expansion of Islam, north, south, west and east.

... لِّتَكُونُواْ شُهَدَاء عَلَى النَّاسِ...

that ye might be witnesses over the nations,

C144. Witnesses: When two persons dispute, they advance extravagant claims. A just witness comes between them, and brings the light of reason to bear on them, pruning all their selfish extravagances. So the mission of Islam is to curb, for instance, the extreme formalism of the Mosaic law and the extreme "other-worldliness" professed by Christianity.

The witness must be unselfish, equipped with first-hand knowledge, and ready to intervene in the cause of justice. Such is the position claimed by Islam among rival systems. Similarly, within Islam itself, the position of witness to whom disputants can appeal is held by Muhammad Al Mustafa.

... وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا...

and the Messenger a witness over yourselves;

... وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلاَّ لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ ...

and We appointed the Qiblah to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the Messenger

... مِمَّن يَنقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ ...

from those who would turn on their heels (from the faith).

C145. The Qiblah of Jerusalem might itself have seemed strange to the Arabs, and the change from it to the

Ka'bah might have seemed strange after they had become used to the other.

In reality one direction or another, or east or west, in itself did no matter, as Allah is in all places, and is independent of Time and Place. What mattered was the sense of discipline, on which Islam lays so much stress: which of us is willing to follow the directions of the chosen Prophet of Allah? Mere quibblers about non-essential matters are tested by this. (R).

... وَإِن كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلاَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللّهُ ...

Indeed it was (a change) momentous, except to those guided by Allah.

... وَمَا كَانَ اللّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ...

And never would Allah make your faith of no effect.

C146. What became of prayer with the Jerusalem Qiblah?

It was equally efficacious before the new Qiblah was ordained. Allah regards our faith: every act of true and genuine faith is efficacious with Him, even if formalists pick holes in such acts.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٤٣)

For Allah is to all people most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاء...

144. We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to the heavens;

C147. This shows the sincere desire of Mustafa to seek light from above in the matter of the Qiblah.

Until the organisation of his own People into a well-knit community, with its distinctive laws and ordinances, he followed a practice based on the fact that the Jews and Christians looked upon Jerusalem as a sacred city. But there was no universal Qiblah among them. Some Jews turned towards Jerusalem as a sacred city. But there was

no universal Qiblah among them. Some Jews turned towards Jerusalem, especially during the Captivity, as we shall see later.

At the time of our Prophet, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Byzantine Empire, which was Christian. But the Christians oriented their churches to the East (hence the word "orientation") which is a point of the compass, and not the direction of any sacred place. The fact of the altar being in the East does not mean that every worshipper has his face to the east; for, according at least to modern practice, the seats in a church are so placed that different worshippers may face in different directions.

The Preacher of Unity naturally wanted, in this as in other matters, a symbol of complete unity, and his heart was naturally delighted when the Qiblah towards the Ka'bah was settled. Its connection with Abraham gave it great antiquity; its character of being an Arab centre made it appropriate when the Message came in Arabic, and was preached through the union of the Arabs; at the time it was adopted, the little Muslim community was shut out of it, being exiles in Madinah, but it became a symbol of bore and eventual triumph, of which Muhammad lived to see the fulfilment; and it also became the centre and gathering ground of all peoples in the universal pilgrimage, which was instituted with it.

... فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا...

now shall We turn thee to a Qiblah that shall please thee.

... فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ...

Turn then thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque; wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction.

C148. The sacred Mosque: i.e. the mosque wherein the Ka'bah is located, in the sacred city of Makkah.

It is not correct to suggest that the command making the Ka'bah the Qiblah abrogates 2:115, where it is stated that East and West belong to Allah, and He is everywhere.

This is perfectly true at all times, before and after the institution of the Qiblah. As if to emphasize this, the same words about East and West are repeated in this very passage; see 2:142 above. Where the Itqan mentions mansukh in this connection, I am sorry I cannot follow that opinion, unless mansukh is defined in a special way, as some of the commentators do. (R).

... وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُواْ الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ...

The people of the Book know well that that is the truth from their Lord,

C149. Glimmerings of such a Qiblah were already foreshadowed in Jewish and Christian practice but its universality was only perfected in Islam.

... وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٤)

nor is Allah unmindful of what they do.

وَلَئِنْ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُواْ الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُواْ قِبْلَتَكَ ...

145. Even if thou wert to bring to the People of the Book all the signs (together), they would not follow thy Qiblah;

... وَمَا أنتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ...

nor art thou going to follow their Qiblah;

... وَمَا بَعْضُهُم بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ...

nor indeed will they follow each other's Qiblah.

C150. See n. 147 to 2:144 above.

The Jews and Christians had a glimmering of the Qiblah idea, but in their attitude of self-sufficiency they were not likely to welcome the Qiblah idea as perfected in Islam.

Nor is Islam, after the fuller knowledge which it has received, likely to revert to the uncertain, imperfect, and varying ideas of orientation held previously.

A very clear glimpse of the old Jewish practice in the matter of the Qiblah and the importance attached to it is found in the book of Daniel, 6:10.

Daniel was a righteous man of princely lineage and lived about 506-538 B.C. He was carried off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, the Assyrian, but was still living when Assyria was overthrown by the Medes and Persians. In spite of the "captivity" of the Jews, Daniel enjoyed the highest offices of state at Babylon, but he was ever true to Jerusalem. His enemies (under the Persian monarch) got a penal law passed against any one who "asked a petition of any god or man for 30 days" except the Persian King.

But Daniel continued true to Jerusalem. "His windows being open in his chambers towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

... وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءهُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ...

If thou, after the knowledge hath reached thee, wert to follow their (vain) desires,

... إِنَّكَ إِذاً لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٤٥)

then wert thou indeed (clearly) in the wrong.

... الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءهُمْ

146. The People of the Book know this as they know their own sons;

C151. The People of the Book should have known all this as well as "they knew their own sons", as their past traditions and teaching should have made them receptive of the new message.

Some commentators construe the demonstrative pronoun **"this"** to refer to the Prophet. In that case the interpretation would be:

> The People of the Book know Muhammad as well as they know their own sons;
>
> they know him to be true and upright;
>
> they know him to be in the line of Abraham; they know him to correspond to the description of the prophet foretold among themselves; but

selfishness induces some of them to act against their own knowledge and conceal the truth.

... وَإِنَّ فَرِيقاً مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٤٦)

but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know.

الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (١٤٧)

147. The truth is from thy Lord, so be not at all in doubt.

C152. Truth only comes from Allah, and it remains truth, however men might try to conceal it or throw doubts on it.

Section 18

وَلِكُلٍّ وِجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَبِقُواْ الْخَيْرَاتِ ...

148. To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together (as in a race) toward all that is good.

C153. The question is how we are to construe the pronoun, **huwa**, in the original. The alternative translation would be;

"To each is a goal to which he turns."

The simile of life being a race in which we all zealously run forward to the one goal of good, may be applied individually and nationally. This supplies another argument of the Ka'bah Qiblah, viz., the unity of goal, with diversity of races, traditions and temperaments.

... أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُواْ يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللّهُ جَمِيعًا ...

Wheresoever ye are, Allah will bring you together.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٤٨)

For Allah hath power over all things.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ...

149. From whencesoever thou startest forth, turn thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque;

C154. The simile of a race is continued, and so the Qiblah command is repeated from that point of view.

In 2:144 it was mentioned as the new symbol of the new nation (Muslim): now it is shown as the symbol of Good, at which we should all aim, from whichever point we started, e.g., as Jews or Christians, or our individual point of view; the Qiblah will unite us as a symbol of the Goal of the Future.

In 2:150 below, it is repeated:

- First for the individual, on the ground of uniformity and the removal of all occasions of dispute and argument; and
- secondly for the Muslim people, on the same ground, as a matter of discipline.

There is another little harmony in the matter of the repetitions.

Note that the race and starting point argument begins at 2:149 and is rounded off in the latter part of 2:150. The latter argument includes the former, and is more widely worded:

"wheresoever ye are": which in the Arabic expression would imply three things;

- in whatever circumstances ye are, or
- at whatever time ye are, or
- in whatever place ye are.

I have spoken before of a sort of musical harmony in verbal repetitions: here there is a sort of pictorial harmony, as of a larger circle symmetrically including a smaller concentric circle.

... وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٩)

that is indeed the truth from thy Lord. And Allah is not unmindful of what ye do.

... وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

150. So from whencesoever thou startest forth, turn thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque;

... وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنتُمْ فَوَلُّواْ وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلاَّ يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ...

among wheresoever ye are turn your face thither, that there be no ground of dispute against you among the people,

... إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ مِنْهُمْ فَلاَ تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي...

except those of them that are bent on wickedness; so fear them not, but fear Me;

... وَلأُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٥٠)

and that I may complete My favors on you, and ye may (consent to) be guided.

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولاً مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ ...

151. A similar (favor have ye already received) in that We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our signs, and purifying you,

C155. This verse should be read with 2:150, of which the sentence is here completed.

The argument is that in the grant of the Ka'bah Qiblah, Allah was perfecting religion and fulfilling the prayer for the future made by Abraham. That prayer was threefold:

1. That Makkah should be made a sacred Sanctuary (2:126);
2. that a truly believing (Muslim) nation should be raised, with places of devotion there (2:128); and
3. that an Apostle should be sent among the Arabs with certain qualities (2:129), which are set out there and again repeated here to complete the argument.

... وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُواْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٥١)

and instructing you in Scripture and wisdom, and in new Knowledge.

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ ...

152. Then do ye remember Me; I will remember you.

C156. The word **"remember"** is too pale a word for **dhikr**, which has now acquired a large number of associations in our religious literature.

In its verbal signification it implies:

- to remember;
- to praise by frequently mentioning;
- to rehearse;
- to celebrate or commemorate;
- to make much of;
- to cherish the memory of as a precious possession. (R).

... وَاشْكُرُواْ لِي وَلاَ تَكْفُرُونِ (١٥٢)

Be grateful to Me, and reject not faith.

Section 19

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اسْتَعِينُواْ بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلاَةِ

153. O ye who believe! seek help with patient perseverance and prayer:

C157. See 2:45 and n. 61.

An additional meaning implied in **sabr** is self-restraint.

Haqqani defines it in his Tafsir as following Reason and restraining Fear, Anger, and Desire.

What can be a higher reward for patience, perseverance, self-restraint and constancy than that Allah should be with us?

For this promise opens the door to every kind of spiritual well-being.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٥٣)

for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

... وَلاَ تَقُولُواْ لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ

154. And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah: "They are dead."

C158. The "patient perseverance and prayer" mentioned in the last verse is not mere passivity. It is active striving in the way of Truth, which is the way of Allah.

Such striving is the spending of one's self in Allah's way,

- either through our property or through our own lives,
- or the lives of those nearest and dearest to us,
- or it may be the loss of all the fruits of a lifetime's labour not only in material goods but in some intellectual
- or moral gain, some position which seemed in our eyes to be eminently desirable in itself, but which we must cheerfully sacrifice if necessary for the Cause.

With such sacrifice, our apparent loss may be our real gain: he that loses his life may really gain it; and the rewards or "fruits" that seem lost were mere impediments on our path to real inward progress. (R).

... بَلْ أَحْيَاء وَلَكِن لاَّ تَشْعُرُونَ (١٥٤)

Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not.

... وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوفْ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الأَمَوَالِ وَالأنفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ

155. Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil),

... وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٥٥)

but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.

C159. The glad tidings are the blessings of Allah in 2:157 or (which is the same thing) the promise in 2:153 that Allah will be with them.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُواْ إِنَّا لِلّهِ وَإِنَّـا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعونَ (١٥٦)

156. Who say, when afflicted with calamity:

"To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return."

... أُولَـئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ

157. They are those on whom (descend) blessings from Allah, and Mercy,

... وَأُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ (١٥٧)

and they are the ones that receive guidance.

... إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِن شَعَآئِرِ اللَّهِ

158. Behold!

Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of Allah.

C160. The virtue of patient perseverance in faith leads to the mention of two symbolic monuments of that virtue.

These are the two little hills of Safa and Marwa now absorbed in the city of Makkah, and close to the well of Zamzam. Here, according to tradition, the lady Hajar, mother of the infant Ismail, prayed for water in the parched desert, and in her eager quest round these hills, she found her prayer answered and saw the Zamzam spring.

Unfortunately the Pagan Arabs had placed a male and a female idol here, and their gross and superstitious rites caused offence to the early Muslims. They felt some hesitation in going round these places during the Pilgrimage. As a matter of fact they should have known that the Ka'bah (the House of Allah) had been itself defiled with idols, and was sanctified again by the purity of Muhammad's life and teaching.

The lesson is that the most sacred things may be turned to the basest uses; that we are not therefore necessarily to ban a thing misused; that if our intentions and life are pure, Allah will recognise them even if the world cast stones at us because of some evil associations which they join with what we do, or with the people we associate with, or with the places which claim our reverence.

... فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ اعْتَمَرَ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَن يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا...

So if those who visit the house in the season or at other times, should compass them round, it is no sin in them.

C161. The House: the Sacred Mosque, the Ka'bah.

The Season of regular Hajj culminates in the visit to Arafat on the ninth day of the month of Dhu al Hijjah, followed by the circumambulation of the Ka'bah.

A visit to the Sacred Mosque and the performance of the rites of pilgrimage at any other time is called an Umrah. The symbolic rites are the same in either case, except that the Arafat rites are omitted in the Umrah.

The Safa and Marwa are included among the Monuments, as pointing to one of the highest of Muslim virtues.

... وَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٥٨)

And if anyone obeyeth his own impulse to good, be sure that Allah is He Who recogniseth and knoweth.

C162. The impulse should be to Good; if once we are sure of this, we must obey it without hesitation, whatever people may say.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَى

159. Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the guidance,

... مِن بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ ...

after We have made it clear for the people in the book,

أُولَـئِكَ يَلعَنُهُمُ اللّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ (١٥٩)

on them shall be Allah's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse.

C163. Those entitled to curse: i.e., angels and mankind (see 2:161 below): the cursed ones will deprive themselves of the protection of Allah and of the angels, who are the Powers of Allah, and of the good wishes of mankind, because by contumaciously rejecting Faith, they not only sin against Allah but are false to their own manhood, which Allah created in the "best of moulds" (95:4).

The terrible curses denounced in the Old Testament are set out in Deut. 28:15-68.

There is one difference.

Here it is for the deliberate rejection of Faith, a theological term for the denying of our higher nature.

There it is for a breach of the lease part of the ceremonial Law. (R).

إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ تَابُواْ وَأَصْلَحُواْ وَبَيَّنُواْ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

160. Except those who repent and make amends and openly declare (the truth), to them I turn;

... وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٦٠)

for I am Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَمَاتُواْ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللّهِ...

161. Those who reject faith, and die rejecting, on them is Allah's curse,

... وَالْمَلآئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٦١)

and the curse of angels, and of all mankind.

... خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا

162. They will abide therein:

C164. Therein: in the curse.

A curse is not a matter of words: it is a terrible spiritual state, opposite to the state of Grace.

Can man curse?

Not of course in the same sense in which we speak of the curse of Allah. A mere verbal curse is of no effect. Hence the English saying:

"A causeless curse will not come."

But if men are oppressed or unjustly treated, their cries can ascend to Allah in prayer, and then it becomes Allah's "wrath" or curse, the deprivation of Allah's Grace as regards the wrongdoer.

... لاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (١٦٢)

Their penalty will not be lightened, nor will respite be their (lot).

وَإِلَـهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لاَّ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٦٣)

163. And your Allah is one Allah;

there is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

C165. Where the terrible consequences of Evil, i.e., the rejection of Allah, are mentioned, there is always stress laid on Allah's attributes of Grace and Mercy.

In this case Unity is also stressed, because we have just been told about the Qiblah symbol of unity and are about to pass the theme of unity in diversity, in Nature and in the social laws of human society.

Section 20

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلاَفِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ...

164. Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day;

... وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنفَعُ النَّاسَ ...

in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind;

... وَمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِن مَّاء فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead;

... وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ...

in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth;

... وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ...

in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth;

... لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٦٤)

(here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise.

C166. This magnificent Nature passage stands out like a hill in a landscape, enhancing the beauty of our view, and preparing us for the every-day laws and ordinances which follow.

Note its literary architecture. Allah is One and among His wondrous Signs is the unity of design in the widest diversity of Nature. The Signs are taken from the features of beauty, power, ad utility to man himself, and lead up to an appeal to Man's own intelligence ad wisdom.

We begin with the glory of the heavens ad the earth, the wide spaces covered by man's imagination, remote and yet so near to his own life. The most striking everyday phenomenon resulting from the interrelations of the heavens ad the earth is the alternation of day ad night, regular and yet changing in duration with the seasons ad the latitudes of our globe.

The night for rest, and the day for work; and we can think of the work in terms of nature's beauty; the stately ships "flowing" (as the original text has it) across the seas, for communications ad merchandise as between men ad men. The seas thus serve us no less than land, and the give-and-take as between sea, sky, ad land, is further exemplified by the rain.

The rain leads to the fertility of the land, and here we are reminded of the contrast between Winter's death of Nature ad her revivification in the Spring. Here we are reminded of agriculture ad the use we make of cattle ad all kinds of living creatures.

The word translated "beasts" has a wide meaning, including crawling creatures, insects, etc. - all contributing to the round of Nature's operations.

This leads us on to the wonderful winds, the region of the air, which man is just beginning to explore ad navigate. The personified winds drive the clouds in the sky like "slaves."

Here is another aspect of clouds besides that of giving rain. The fleecy clouds are things of sunset beauty; at midday they temper the glare of the sun; at all times they affect radiation ad other processes going on in the sky. So we come back to the sky, rounding off the argument, and correlating our life with the Will ad Power of Allah, if we had the wisdom to see!.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ أندَاداً يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللّهِ...

165. Yet there are men who take (for worship) others besides Allah as equal (with Allah); they love them as they should love Allah.

... وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّهِ...

But those of faith are overflowing in their love for Allah.

... وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ إِذْ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلّهِ جَمِيعاً...

If only the unrighteous could see, behold, they would see the penalty, that to Allah belongs all power,

... وَأَنَّ اللّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ (١٦٥)

and Allah will strongly enforce the Punishment.

C167. Everything around and within us points to unity of purpose and design, - points to Allah. Yet there are foolish persons (unrighteous - those who deliberately use the choice given them to go wrong). They think something else is equal to Allah. Perhaps they even do lip service to Allah.

If only the unrighteous could see the consequences, they would see the terrible Penalty, and that all Power is in Allah's hands, not in that of any one else.

Who are these others who are used as fetishes by the misguided?

It may be:

- creatures of their own imagination, or of their faculties misused; the idea lying behind Idols is akin to this, for no intelligent idol-worshipper owns to worshipping stocks and stones; or
- good leaders whose names have been misused out of perversity to erect them to a position of equality with Allah; or
- Powers of evil that deliberately mislead.

When it comes to the inevitable consequences of blasphemy and the rejection of Allah, the eyes of all are opened and these false and artificial, relations dissolve.

The idea which was created into a fetish disowns its follower, i.e. is seen to have no reasonable basis in the life of the follower, and the follower is forced to renounce it as false. The good ones would take an unholy delight in exposing the facts. The Reality is now irresistible but alas! at what cost?

إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتُّبِعُواْ مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُواْ وَرَأَوُاْ الْعَذَابَ...

166. Then would those who are followed clear themselves of those who follow (them); they would see the penalty,

... وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الأَسْبَابُ (١٦٦)

and all relations between them would be cut off.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُواْ لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّؤُواْ مِنَّا...

167. And those who followed would say:

"If only we had one more chance, we would clear ourselves of them, as they have cleared themselves of us."

... كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

Thus will Allah show them (the fruits of) their deeds as (nothing but) regrets,

C168. Cf. 3:156, 7:36, 19:39, 25:23, 69:50, [Eds]

... وَمَا هُم بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ(١٦٧)

nor will there be a way for them out of the Fire.

C.50 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:168-242)

The Society thus organized

Must live under laws

That would guide their everyday life-

Based on eternal principles

Of righteousness and fair dealing

Cleanliness and sobriety,
Honesty and helpfulness,
One to another-yet shaped
Into concrete forms, to suit
Times and circumstances
And the varying needs
Of average men and women;
The food to be clean and wholesome;
Blood feuds to be abolished;
The rights and duties of heirs
To be recognized after death,
Not in a spirit of Formalism,
But to help the weak and the needy
And check all selfish wrongdoings;
Self-denial to be learnt by fasting;
The courage to fight in defence
Of right, to be defined;
The Pilgrimage to be sanctified
As a symbol of unity;
Charity and help to the poor
To be organized; unseemly riot
And drink and gambling
To be banished; orphans to be protected;
Marriage, divorce, and widowhood
To be regulated; and the rights of women,
Apt to be trampled under foot,
Now clearly affirmed.

Section 21

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ...

168. O ye people!

... كُلُواْ مِمَّا فِي الأَرْضِ حَلاَلاً طَيِّباً...

eat of what is on earth, lawful and good;

C169. We now come to the regulations about food.

- First (2:168-71) we have an appeal to all people, Muslims, Pagans, as well as the People of the Book;
- then (2:172-73) to the Muslims specially;
- then (2:174-76) to the sort of men who then (as some do now) either believe in too much formalism or believe in no restrictions at all.

Islam follows the Golden Mean. All well-regulated societies lay down reasonable limitations. These become incumbent on all loyal members of any given society, and show what is "lawful" in that society. But if the limitations are reasonable, as they should be, the "lawful" will also coincide more and more with what is "good".

Good: Tayyub: Pure, Clean, wholesome, pleasing to the taste.

The general principle then would be:

- what is lawful and what is good, should be followed, not what is evil, or shameful, or foisted on by false ascription to divine injections, or
- what rests merely on the usage of ancestors, even though the ancestors were ignorant or foolish.

An example of a shameful custom would be that among the Pagan Arabs of taking congealed blood and eating it fried.

... وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٦٨)

and do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy.

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَن تَقُولُواْ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٦٩)

169. For he commands you what is evil and shameful, and that ye should say of Allah that of which ye have no knowledge.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ ...

170. When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed,"

... قَالُواْ بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءنَا...

they say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers."

... أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ (١٧٠)

What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لاَ يَسْمَعُ إِلاَّ دُعَاء وَنِدَاء...

171. The parable of those who reject faith is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries;

C170. If you reject all faith, the highest wisdom and the most salutary regulations are lost on you. You are like "dumb driven cattle" who can merely hear calls, but cannot distinguish intelligently between shades of meaning or subtle differences of values.

... صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٧١)

deaf, dumb, and blind, they are void of wisdom.

C171. Cf. 2:18, where we are told that the rejecters of faith are "deaf, dumb and blind: they will not return to the path."

Here the consequence of their not using their senses is that they have no wisdom. In each context there is just the appropriate deduction.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ كُلُواْ مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ ...

172. O ye who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided for you,

... وَاشْكُرُواْ لِلّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ (١٧٢)

and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship.

C172. Gratitude for Allah's gifts is one form of worship.

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنزِيرِ ...

173. He hath only forbidden you dead meat, and blood, and the flesh of swine,

C173. Dead meat: maitat: carrion; animal that dies of itself; the original Arabic has a slightly wider meaning given to it in Fiqah (Religious Law); anything that dies of itself and is not expressly killed for food with the Takbir duly pronounced on it.

But there are exceptions, e.g., fish and locusts are lawful, though they have not been made specially *Halal* with the Takbir. But even fish or locusts as carrion would be obviously ruled out.

... وَمَا أُهِلَّ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللّهِ...

and that on which any other name hath been invoked besides that of Allah,

C174. For prohibited foods, Cf. also 5:4-5; 6:121, 138-146; etc.

The teachers of Fiqah (Religious Law) work out the details with great elaboration. My purpose is to present general principles, not technical details.

Carrion or dead meat and blood as articles of food would obviously cause disgust to any refined person. So would swine's flesh where the swine live on offal. Where swine are fed artificially on clean food, the objections remain:

1. that they are filthy animals in other respects, and the flesh of filthy animals taken as food affects the eaten;
2. that swine's flesh has more fat than muscle-building material; and
3. that it is more liable to disease than other kinds of meat; e.g., trichinosis, characterized by hair-like worms in the muscular tissue.

As to food dedicated to idols or false gods, it is obviously unseemly for the Children of Unity to partake of it.

... فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلاَ عَادٍ فَلا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ...

but if one is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then is he guiltless.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٧٣)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً

174. Those who conceal Allah's revelations in the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit,

... أُولَـئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلاَّ النَّارَ ...

they swallow into themselves naught but fire;

C175. "They eat nothing but fire into their bellies" is a literal translation that produces an effect of rude inelegance which is not in the Arabic words.

Even in the matter of food and drinks, the mission of Islam is to avoid the extremes of lawlessness on the one hand and extreme formalism on the other. It has laid down a few simply and very reasonable rules. Their infraction causes loss of health or physical powers in any case.

But if there is further a spirit of subjective rebellion or fraud - passing off in the name of religion something which is far from the purpose - the consequences become also moral and spiritual. Then it becomes a sin against Faith and Spirit.

Continuing the physical simile, we actually swallow fire into ourselves. Imagine the torments which we should have if we swallowed fire into our physical body! They would be infinitely worse in our spiritual state, and they would go on to the Day of Resurrection, when we shall be deprived even of the words which the Judge speaks to a reasonable culprit, and we shall certainly not win His Grace and Mercy.

... وَلاَ يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلاَ يُزَكِّيهِمْ ...

Allah will not address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them;

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٧٤)

grievous will be their penalty.

أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُاْ الضَّلاَلَةَ بِالْهُدَى وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ...

175. They are the ones who buy error in place of guidance and torment in place of forgiveness.

... فَمَآ أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ (١٧٥)

Ah! what boldness (they show) for the Fire!

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ...

176. (Their doom is) because Allah sent down the Book in truth

... وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُواْ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ (١٧٦)

but those who seek causes of dispute in the Book are in a schism far (from the purpose).

C176. From the mere physical regulation we are at once lifted up into the sphere of morals and faith. For the one acts and reacts on the other. If we are constantly carping at wholesome regulations, we shall do nothing but cause division and schisms among the people, and ordered society would tend to break up.

Section 22

لَّيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَن تُوَلُّواْ وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ ...

177. It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces toward East or West;

... وَلَـكِنَّ الْبِرَّ ...

but it is righteousness

C177. As if to emphasize again a warning against deadening formalism, we are given a beautiful description of the righteous and God-fearing man. He

should obey salutary regulation, but he should fix his gaze on the love of Allah and the love of his fellow-men.

We are given four heads:

1. our faith should be true and sincere;
2. we must be prepared to show it in deeds of charity to our fellowmen;
3. we must be good citizens, supporting social organisation; and
4. our own individual soul must be firm and unshaken in all circumstances. They are interconnected, and yet can be viewed separately.

... مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَالْمَلآئِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ...

to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers;

C178. Faith is not merely a matter of words. We must realise the presence and goodness of Allah. When we do so, the scales fall form our eyes: all the falsities and fleeting nature of the Present cease to enslave us, for we see the Last Day as if it were today.

We also see Allah's working in His world and in us; His Powers (angels), His Messengers and His Message are no longer remote from us, but come within our experience. (R).

... وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى ...

to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin,

C179. Practical deeds of charity are of value when they proceed from love, and from no other motive. In this respect, also, our duties take various forms, which are shown in reasonable gradation:

- our kith and kin;
- orphans (including any persons who are without support or help);
- people who are in real need but who never ask (it is our duty to find them out, and they come before those who ask);

- the stranger, who is entitled to laws of hospitality;
- the people who ask and are entitled to ask, i.e., not merely lazy beggars, but those who seek our assistance in some form or another (it is our duty to respond to them);
- and the slaves (we must do all we can to give or buy their freedom). Slavery has many insidious forms, and all are included.

... وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّآئِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ...

for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves;

... وَأَقَامَ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُواْ...

to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made;

C180. Charity and piety in individual cases do not complete our duties. In prayer and charity, we must also look to our organized efforts: where there is a Muslim State, these are made through the State, in facilities for public prayer, and public assistance, and for the maintenance of contracts and fair dealing in all matters.

... وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاء والضَّرَّاء وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ...

and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic.

C181. Then come the Muslim virtues of firmness and patience. They are to "preserve the dignity of man, with soul erect" (Burns).

Three sets of circumstances are specially mentioned for the exercise of this virtue:

1. bodily pain or suffering,
2. adversities or injuries of all kinds, deserved and underserved and
3. periods of public panic, such as war, violence, pestilence, etc.

... أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ (١٧٧)

Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ ...

178. O ye who believe!

the law of equality is prescribed to you

C182. Note first that this verse and the next make it clear that Islam has much mitigated the horrors of the pre-Islamic custom of retaliation. In order to meet the strict claims of justice, **equality** is prescribed, with a strong recommendation for mercy and forgiveness.

To translate **qisas**, therefore, by retaliation, is I think incorrect. The Latin legal term Lex Talionsis may come near it, but even that is modified here. In any case it is best to avoid technical terms for things that are very different.

"Retaliation" in English has a wider meaning, equivalent almost to returning evil for evil, and would more fitly apply to the blood-feuds of the Days of Ignorance.

Islam says:

if you must take a life for a life, at least there should be some measure of equality in it; the killing of the salve of a tribe should not involve a blood feud where many free men would be killed; but the law of mercy, where it can be obtained by consent, with reasonable compensation, would be better.

Our law of equality only takes account of three conditions in civil society,

- free for free,
- slave for slave,
- woman for woman.

Among free men or women, all are equal: you cannot ask that because a wealthy, or high-born, or influential man is killed, his life is equal to two or three lives among the poor or the lowly. Nor, in cases of murder, can you go into the value or abilities of a slave.

A woman is mentioned separately because her position as a mother or an economic worker is different. She does not form a third class, but a division in the other two classes.

One life having been lost, do not waste many lives in retaliation: at most, let the Law take one life under strictly prescribed conditions, and shut the door to private vengeance or tribal retaliation. But if the aggrieved party consents (and this condition of consent is laid down to prevent worse evils), forgiveness and brotherly love is better, and the door of Mercy is kept open. In Western law, no felony can be compounded.

... الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلَى...

in cases of murder;

C183. The jurists have carefully laid down that the law of qisas refers to murder only. Qisas is not applicable to manslaughter, due to a mistake or an accident. There, there would be no capital punishment.

... الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالأُنثَى بِالأُنثَى ...

the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman.

... فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ...

But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain,

C184. The brother: the term is perfectly general; all men are brothers in Islam. In this, and in all questions of inheritance, females have similar rights to males, and therefore the masculine gender imports both sexes.

Here we are considering the rights of the heirs in the light of the larger brotherhood.

- In 2:178-79 we have the rights of the heirs to life (as it were):
- in 2:180-82 we proceed to the heirs to property.

... شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاء إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ...

then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude;

C185. The **demand** should be such as can be met by the party concerned, i.e., within his means, and reasonable according to justice and good conscience.

For example, a demand could not be made affecting the honour of a woman or a man. The whole penalty can be remitted if the aggrieved party agrees, out of brotherly love. In meeting that demand the culprit or his friends should equally be generous and recognise the good-will of the other side. There should be no subterfuges, no bribes, no unseemly bye-play: otherwise the whole intention of mercy and peace is lost.

... ذَٰلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ...

this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord.

... فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٧٨)

After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty.

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٧٩)

179. In the law of equality there is (saving of) life to you, O ye men of understanding! that ye may restrain yourselves.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِن تَرَكَ خَيْرًا...

180. It is prescribed, when death approaches any of you, if he leave any goods,

... الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٨٠)

that he make a bequest to parents and next of kin, according to reasonable usage; this is due from the Allah-fearing.

C186. There are rules of course for the disposal of interstate property. But it is a good thing that a dying man or woman should, of his own free-will, think of his parents and his next of kin, not in a spirit of injustice to other, but in a spirit of love and reverence for those who have cherished him.

He must, however, do it "according to reasonable usage": the limitations will be seen further on.

فَمَن بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَمَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ ...

181. If anyone changes the bequest after hearing it, the guilt shall be on those who make the change.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٨١)

For Allah hears and knows all things.

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِن مُّوصٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلاَ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ...

182. But if anyone fears partiality or wrongdoing on the part of the testator, and makes peace between (the parties concerned), there is no wrong in him;

C187. A verbal will is allowed, but it is expected that the testator will be just to his heirs and not depart from what is considered equitable. For this reason definite shares were laid down for heirs later (see 4:11, etc.).

These define or limit the testamentary power, but do not abrogate it. For example, amongst kin there are persons, e.g., an orphan grandson in the presence of surviving sons who would not inherit under the interstate scheme, and the testator might like to provide for them. Again, there may be outsiders for whom he may wish to provide, and jurists have held that he has powers of disposition up to one-third of his property. But he must not be partial to one heir at the expense of another, or attempt to defeat lawful creditors.

If he tries to do this, those who are witnesses to his oral disposition may interfere in two ways.

- One way would be to persuade the testator to change his bequest before he dies.
- The other way would be after death, to get the interested parties together and ask them to agree to a more equitable arrangement.

In such a case they are acting in good faith, and there is no fraud. They are doing nothing wrong. Islam approves of every lawful device for keeping brethren at peace, without litigation and quarrels. Except for this, the changing of the provisions of a Will is a crime, as it is under all Law.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٨٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 23

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

183. O ye who believe!

... كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٨٣)

fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint.

C188. As it was prescribed: this does not mean that the Muslim fast is like the other fasts previously observed, in the number of days, in the time or manner of the fast, or in other incidents; it only means that the principle of self-denial by fasting is not a new one.

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ...

184. (Fasting) for a fixed number of days;

C189. This verse should be read with the following verses, 185-88, in order that the incidents of the physical fast may be fully understood with reference to its spiritual meaning.

The Muslim fast is not meant for self-torture. Although it is stricter than other fasts, it also provides alleviations for special circumstances. If it were merely a temporary abstention from food and drink, it would be salutary, to many people, who habitually eat and drink to excess.

The instincts for food, drink, and sex are strong in the animal nature, and temporary restraints from all these enables the attention to be directed to higher things. This is necessary through prayer, contemplation and acts of charity, not of the showy kind, but by seeking out those really in need.

Certain standards are prescribed, but much higher standards are recommended.

... فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ...

but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later.

C190. For journeys, a minimum standard of three marches is prescribed by some Commentators: others make it more precise by naming a distance of 16 farsakhs, equivalent to 48 miles. A journey of 8 or 9 miles on foot is more tiring than a similar one by bullock cart. There are various degrees of fatigue in riding a given distance on horseback or by camel or in a comfortable train or by motor car or by steamer, aeroplane, or airship.

In my opinion the standard must depend on the means of locomotion and on the relative resources of the traveler. It is better to determine it in each case according to circumstances. (R).

... وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ...

For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him,

C191. Those who can do it with hardship: such as aged people, or persons specially circumstanced.

The Shafi'is would include a woman expecting a child, or one who is nursing a baby, but on this point opinion is not unanimous, some holding that they ought to put in the fasts later, when they can.

... وَأَن تَصُومُواْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٤)

and it is better for you, that ye fast, if ye only knew.

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِيَ أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ...

185. Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'án, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong).

C192. Judgment (between right and wrong):

Furqan: the criterion or standard by which we judge between right and wrong. See 2:53 n. 68.

... فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ...

So everyone of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting,

... وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ...

but if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period, (should be made up) by days later.

... يُرِيدُ اللّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلاَ يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ...

Allah intends every facility for you, He does not want to put you to difficulties.

... وَلِتُكْمِلُواْ الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُواْ اللّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ ...

(He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you;

C193. The regulations are again and again coupled with an insistence on two things:

- the facilities and concessions given, and
- the spiritual significance of the fast, without which it is like an empty shell without a kernel.

If we realise this, we shall look upon Ramadhan, not as a burden, but as a blessing, and shall be duly grateful for the lead given to us in this matter.

... وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٨٥)

and perchance ye shall be grateful.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ...

186. When my servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them);

... أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ...

I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me;

... فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُواْ لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُواْ بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ (١٨٦)

let them also, with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me; that they may walk in the right way.

C194. These verses 186 and 188 are not foreign to the subject of Ramadhan, but emphasize its spiritual aspect.

- Here we are told of Prayer and the nearness of Allah, and
- in 188 we are asked not to "eat up" other people's substance.

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَآئِكُمْ...

187. Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives.

... هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ...

They are your garments. And ye are their garments.

C195. Men and women are each other's **garments:** i.e., they are for mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection, fitting into each other as a garment fits the body.

A garment also is both for show and concealment.

The question of sex is always delicate to handle: here we are told that even in such matters a clear, open, and honest course is better than fraud or self-deception. The sex instinct is classed with eating and drinking, an animal thing to be restrained, but not to be ashamed of. The three things are prohibited during the fast by day, but permitted after the fast is broken at night till the next fast commences.

... عَلِمَ اللّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ...

Allah knoweth what ye used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you;

... فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُواْ مَا كَتَبَ اللّهُ لَكُمْ...

so now associate with them, and seek what Allah hath ordained for you,

C196. There is difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of this. I would connect this as a parallel clause

with the clause "eat and drink", which follows, all three being governed by "until the white thread", etc.

That is, all three things must stop when the fast begins again in the early morning.

Or it may mean: What is permitted is well enough, but seek the higher things ordained for you.

... وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ...

and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread;

C197. Those in touch with Nature know the beautiful effects of early dawn.

First appear thin white indefinable streaks of light in the east; then a dark zone supervenes; followed by a beautiful pinkish white zone clearly defined from the dark. This is the true dawn; after that the fast begins.

... ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى الَّلَيْلِ...

then complete your fast till the night appears;

C198. Till the night appears: From the actual practice of the Holy Prophet, this is rightly interpreted to mean: "Till sunset."

... وَلاَ تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ...

but do not associate with your wives while ye are in retreat in the mosques.

C199. This verse refers to the known Islamic practice called i'tikaf which means retreating to Mosques for devotion and worship. The Prophet (peace be on him) used to retreat to the mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan. [Eds].

... تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللّهِ فَلاَ تَقْرَبُوهَا...

Those are limits (set by) Allah; approach not nigh thereto.

C200. I construe these limits as applying to the whole of the regulations about fasts.

... كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (١٨٧)

Thus doth Allah make clear His signs to men, that they may learn self-restraint.

وَلاَ تَأْكُلُواْ أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُواْ بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ...

188. And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges,

... لِتَأْكُلُواْ فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالإِثْمِ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٨)

with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people's property.

C201. Besides the three primal physical needs of man, which are apt to make him greedy, there is a fourth greed in society, the greed of wealth and property. The purpose of fasts is not completed until this fourth greed is also restrained.

Ordinarily honest men are content if they refrain from robbery, theft, or embezzlement. Two more subtle forms of the greed are mentioned here. One is where one uses one's own property for corrupting others - judges or those in authority - so as to obtain some material gain even under the cover and protection of the law.

The words translated "other people's property may also mean "public property". A still more subtle form is where we use our own property or property under our own control - "among yourselves" in the Text - for vain or frivolous uses. Under the Islamic standard this is also greed. Property carries with it its own responsibilities.

If we fail to understand or fulfil them, we have not learnt the full lesson of self-denial by fasts.

Section 24

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الأهِلَّةِ...

189. They ask thee concerning the new moons.

C202. There were many superstitions connected with the New Moon, as there are to the present day. We are told to disregard such superstitions.

As a measure of time, where the lunar calendar is used, the New Moon is one great sign, for which people watch with eagerness. Muslim festivals, including the Pilgrimage, are fixed by the appearance of the New Moon.

The Arabs, among other superstitions, had one which made them enter their houses by the back door during or after the Pilgrimage. This is disapproved, for there is no virtue in any such artificial restrictions. All virtue proceeds from the love and fear of Allah.

... قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ...

Say: they are but signs to mark fixed periods of time in (the affairs of) men, and for pilgrimage.

... وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِن ظُهُورِهَا وَلَـكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَى ...

It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back; it is virtue if ye fear Allah.

... وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (١٨٩)

Enter houses through the proper doors, and fear Allah, that ye may prosper.

C203. This is a Muslim proverb now, and much might be written about its manifold meanings. A few may be noted here.

- If you enter a society, respect its manners and customs.
- If you want to achieve an object honorably, go about it openly and not "by a backdoor".
- Do not beat about the bush. If you wish success in an undertaking, provide all the necessary instruments for it.

The subject of the New Moon provides a good transition between the Ramadan fast, which begins and ends with the New Moon, the Pilgrimage, whose ten days commence with the New Moon, and the War which Islam had to wage in self-defence against the Pagans, who wanted to exclude them from the Pilgrimage after they had driven them out of the house and home.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ...

190. Fight in the Cause of Allah, those who fight you, but do not transgress limits;

C204. War is only permissible in self-defence, and under well-defined limits. When undertaken, it must be pushed with vigour, but not relentlessly, but only to restore peace and freedom for the worship of Allah.

In any case strict limits must not be transgressed: women, children, old and infirm men should not be molested, nor trees and crops cut down, nor peace withheld when the enemy comes to terms. (R).

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (١٩٠)

for Allah loveth not transgressors.

وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُم مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ ...

191. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out;

... وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ...

for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter;

... وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِندَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ...

but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there;

C205. This passage is illustrated by the events that happened at Hudaybiyah in the sixth year of the Hijrah, though it is not clear that it was revealed on that occasion.

The Muslims were by this time a strong and influential community. many of them were exiles from Mecca, where the Pagans had established an intolerant autocracy, persecuting Muslims, preventing them from visiting their homes, and even keeping them out by force from performing the Pilgrimage during the universally recognised period of truce.

This was intolerance, oppression, and autocracy to the last degree, and the mere readiness of the Muslims to

enforce their rights as Arab citizens resulted without bloodshed in an agreement which the Muslims faithfully observed.

The Pagans, however, had no scruples in breaking faith, and it is unnecessary here to go into subsequent events.

In general, it may be said that Islam is the religion of peace, good will, mutual understanding, and good faith. But it will acquiesce in wrongdoing, and its men will hold their lives cheap in defence of honour, justice, and the religion which they hold sacred. Their ideal is that of heroic virtue combined with unselfish gentleness and tenderness, such as is exemplified in the life of the Prophet.

They believe in courage, obedience, discipline, duty, and a constant striving by all the means in their power, physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, for the establishment of truth and righteousness.

They know that war is an evil, but they will not flinch from them it if their honour demands it and a righteous Imam (such as Muhammad was *par excellences)* commands it, for then they know they are not serving carnal ends. In other cases, war has nothing to do with their faith, except that it will always be regulated by its humane precepts. (R).

... فَإِن قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٩١)

but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.

C206. Suppress faith: in the narrower as well as the larger sense.

If they want forcibly to prevent you from exercising your sacred rites, they have declared war on your religion, and it would be cowardice to ignore the challenge or to fail in rooting out the tyranny.

فَإِنِ انتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٩٢)

192. But if they cease, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لاَ تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلّهِ...

193. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah;

C207. Justice and faith: The Arabic word is Din, which is comprehensive. It implies the ideas of indebtedness, duty, obedience, judgment, justice, faith, religion, customary rites, etc.

The clause means: "until there is Din for Allah."

... فَإِنِ انتَهَواْ فَلاَ عُدْوَانَ إِلاَّ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ (١٩٣)

but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.

C208. If the opposite party cease to persecute you, your hostility ends with them as a party, but it does not mean, that you become friends to oppression. Your fight is against wrong; there should be no rancour against men.

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ...

194. The prohibited month for the prohibited month, and so for all things prohibited, there is the law of equality.

C209. Haram: prohibited, sacred.

The month of Pilgrimage (Dhu al Hajja) was a sacred month, in which warfare was prohibited by Arab custom. The month preceding (Dhu al Qadah) and the month following (Muharram) were included in the prohibition, and Muharram was specially called al-Haram.

Possibly Muharram is meant in the first line, and the other months and other prohibited things in "all things prohibited".

In Rajab, also, war was prohibited.

If the pagan enemies of Islam broke that custom and made war in the prohibited months, the Muslims were free also to break that custom but only to the same extent as the other broke it.

Similarly the territory of Makkah was sacred, in which war was prohibited. If the enemies of Islam broke that custom, the Muslims were free to do so to that extent. Any convention is useless if one party does not respect it.

There must be a law of equality. Or perhaps the word reciprocity may express it better.

... فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ ...

If then anyone transgresses the prohibition against you, transgress ye likewise against him.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٩٤)

But fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves.

C210. At the same time the Muslims are commanded to exercise self-restraint as much as possible.

Force is a dangerous weapon. It may have to be used for self-defence or self-preservation, but we must always remember that self-restraint is pleasing in the eyes of Allah. Even when we are fighting, it should be for a principle, not out of passion.

... وَأَنفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

195. And spend of your substance in the Cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to your destruction,

C211. Every fight requires the wherewithals for the fight, the "sinews of war".

- If the war is just and in the cause of Allah, all who have wealth must spend it freely. That may be their contribution to the Cause, in addition to their personal effort, or if for any reason they are unable to fight.
- If they hug their wealth, perhaps their own hands are helping in their own self destruction. Or

- if their wealth is being spent, not in the Cause of Allah, but in something which pleases their fancy, it may be that the advantage goes to the enemy, and they are by their action helping their own destruction.

In all things, their standard should be, not selfishness, but the good of their brethren, for such good is pleasing to Allah.

... وَأَحْسِنُوٓاْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٩٥)

but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good.

... وَأَتِمُّواْ الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ

196. And complete the Hajj or 'Umrah in the service of Allah.

C212. See 2:158, n. 161.

The **Hajj** is the complete pilgrimage, of which the chief rites are during the first ten days of the month of Dhu al Hajja.

The **Umrah** is a less formal pilgrimage at any time of the year.

In either case, the intending pilgrim commences by putting on a simply garment of unsewn cloth in two pieces when he is some distance yet from Makkah.

The putting on of the pilgrim garb (ihram) is symbolical of his renouncing the vanities of the world.

After this and until the end of the pilgrimage he must not wear other clothes, or ornaments, anoint his hair, use perfumes, hunt, or do other prohibited acts. The completion of the pilgrimage is symbolized by the shaving of the head for men, and the cutting off of a few locks of the hair of the head for women, the putting off of the ihram and the resumption of the ordinary dress.

Here we are told:

1. That having once undertaken the pilgrimage, we must complete it;

2. that we must do it not for worldly ends, but as a symbol of our service and worship to Allah;
3. that if we are prevented for any reason, from completing the rites, a symbolical completion can be made by sending an offering for sacrifice; sacrifice would have been offered if we had been present personally; here we would send the sacrifice vicariously, and when it is likely to reach the place of sacrifice, we could then shave our heads and resume our ordinary dress and avocations. (R).

... فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ...

But if ye are prevented (from completing it), send an offering for sacrifice, such as ye may find,

... وَلاَ تَحْلِقُوا رُؤُوسَكُمْ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهُ ...

and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice.

... فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضاً أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِّن رَّأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّن صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ...

And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, (necessitating shaving), (he should) in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice;

C213. If any one is taken ill after putting on the ihram, so that he has to put on other clothes, or if he has trouble or skin disease in his head or insects in his hair, and he has to shave his head before completion, he should fast (three days, say the Commentators), or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice.

... فَإِذَا أَمِنتُمْ ...

and, when ye are in peaceful conditions (again),

C214. When this was revealed, the city of Makkah was in the hands of the enemies of Islam, and the regulations about the fighting and the pilgrimage came together and were interconnected. But the revelation provides, as always, for the particular occasion, and also for normal conditions.

Makkah soon passed out of the hands of the enemies of Islam. People sometimes came long distances to Makkah before the pilgrimage season began. Having performed the Umrah, they stayed on for the formal Hajj.

In case the pilgrim had spent his money, he is shown what he can do, rich or poor, and yet hold his head high among his fellows, as having performed all rites as prescribed.

... فَمَن تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ...

if anyone wishes to continue the 'Umrah on to the Hajj, he must make an offering, such as he can afford it,

... فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تِلْكَ عَشَرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ...

he should fast three days during the Hajj and seven days on his return, making ten days in all.

... ذَلِكَ لِمَن لَّمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ...

This is for those whose household is not in (the precincts of) the Sacred Mosque.

C215. There is disagreement among Jurists wheter residents of Makkah are allowed to make *tamattu'* or not. However, the four schools of law are agreed that sacrificial offering is not obligatory for the residents of Makkah. [Eds].

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (١٩٦)

And fear Allah, and know that Allah is strict in punishment.

C216. This closes the section about the duties of fighting and introduces the connected question of pilgrimage in a sort of transition.

Fighting is connected with fear, and while it is meritorious to obey Allah, we are warned that we must not allow our selfish passions to carry us away, because it is in such times of stress that our spirit is tested.

Verse 195 ended with a benediction for those who do good.

This verse ends with a warning to those who take advantage of Allah's cause to transgress the limits, for the punishment is equally sure.

The next verse shows us the pitfalls we must avoid in a large concourse of people.

Section 25

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ...

197. For Hajj are the months well known.

C217. The months well known: the months of Shawwal, Dhu al Qadah, and Dhu al Hijjah (up to the 10th or the 13th) are set apart for the rites of Hajj. That is to say, the first rites may begin as early as the beginning of Shawwal, with a definite approach to Makkah, but the chief rites are concentrated on the first ten days of Dhu al Hijjah, and specially on the 8th, 9th and 10th of that month, when the concourse of pilgrims reaches its height.

The chief rites may be briefly enumerated:

1. the wearing of the pilgrim garment (ihram) from certain points definitely fixed on all the roads to Makkah; after this the pilgrimage prohibitions come into operation and the pilgrim is dedicated to worship and prayer and the denial of vanities;
2. the going round the Ka'bah seven times (tawaf), typifying activity, with the kissing of the little Black Stone built into the wall, the symbol of concentration in the love of God;
3. After a short prayer at the Station of Abraham (2:125), the pilgrim goes to the hills Safa and Marwa (2:158), the symbols of patience and perseverance;
4. the great Sermon (Khutbah) on the 7th of Dhu al Hijjah, when the whole assembly listens to an exposition of the meaning of Hajj;

5. the visit on the eighth, of the whole body of pilgrims to the Valley of Mina (about six miles north of Makkah), where the pilgrims halt and stay the night, proceeding on the ninth to the plain and hill of Arafat, about five miles further north, which commemorates the reunion of Adam and Eve after their wanderings, and is also called the Mount of Mercy;

6. the tenth day, the Id Day, the day of Sacrifice, when the sacrifice is offered in the Valley of Mina, and the symbolic ceremony of casting seven stones at the Evil One is performed on the first occasion; it is continued on subsequent days;

   both rites are connected with the story of Abraham; this is the Id al Adha;

   note that the ceremony is symbolically connected with the rejection of evil in thought, word, and deed. This closes the Pilgrimage, but a stay of two or three days after this is recommended, and these days are called Tashriq days. (R).

... فَمَن فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلاَ رَفَثَ وَلاَ فُسُوقَ وَلاَ جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ...

If anyone undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity nor wickedness, nor wrangling in the Hajj.

... وَمَا تَفْعَلُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمْهُ اللّهُ ...

And whatever good ye do, (be sure) Allah knoweth it.

... وَتَزَوَّدُواْ فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى...

And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct.

C218. It is recommended that pilgrims should come with provisions, so that they should not be compelled to resort to begging.

But, as usual, our thought is directed at once from the physical to the spiritual. If provisions are required for a journey on earth, how much more important to provide for the final journey into the future world?

The best of such provisions is right conduct, which is the same as the fear of Allah.

... وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُوْلِي الأَلْبَابِ (١٩٧)

So fear Me, o ye that are wise!

... لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَن تَبْتَغُواْ فَضْلاً مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ

198. It is no crime in you if ye seek of the bounty of your Lord (during Pilgrimage).

C219. Legitimate trade is allowed, in the interests both of the honest trader, who can thus meet his own expenses, and of the generality of pilgrims, who would otherwise be greatly inconvenienced for the necessaries of life.

But the profit must be sought as from the "bounty of Allah". There should be no profiteering, or trade "tricks".

Good honest trade is a form of service to the community, and therefore to Allah.

... فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُم مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُواْ اللّهَ عِندَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ...

Then when ye pour down from (Mount) Arafat, celebrate the praises of Allah at the Sacred Monument,

C220. About midway between Arafat and Mina (see n. 217 to 2:197) is a place called Muzdalifah where the Holy Prophet offered up a long prayer. It has thus become a Sacred Monument and pilgrims are directed to follow that example on their return. A special reason for this is given in the note following.

... وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِن كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الضَّآلِّينَ (١٩٨)

and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though, before this, ye went astray.

C221. Certain arrogant tribes living in Makkah used not to go to Arafat with the crown but to stop short at Muzdalifah. They are rebuked for their arrogance and told that they must perform all the rites like the rest of the pilgrims. There is equality in Islam.

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُواْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُواْ اللّهَ...

199. Then pass on at a quick pace from the place whence it is usual for the multitude so to do, and ask for Allah's forgiveness.

C222. See the last note.

Towards the end of the Pilgrimage the crowd is very great, and if any people loitered after Arafat, it would cause great confusion and inconvenience. The pace has therefore to be quick for every one, a very salutary regulation.

Every member of the crown must think of the comfort and convenience of the whole mass.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٩٩)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُم مَّنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُواْ اللّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا...

200. So when ye have accomplished your holy rites, celebrate the praises of Allah, as ye used to celebrate the praises of your fathers, yea, with far more heart and soul.

C223. After the Pilgrimage, in Pagan times, the pilgrims used to gather in assemblies in which the praises of ancestors were sung.

As the whole of the pilgrimage rites were spiritualised in Islam, so this aftermath of the pilgrimage was also spiritualised. It was recommended for pilgrims to stay on two or three days after the pilgrimage, but they must use them in prayer and praise to Allah.

See 2:203 below. (R).

... فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلاَقٍ (٢٠٠)

There are men who say: "Our Lord! give us (thy bounties) in this world!" but they will have no portion in the Hereafter.

C224. If you hasten to get all the good things of the world, and only think of them and pray for them, you would lose the higher things of the future.

The proper Muslim attitude is neither to renounce this would nor to be so engrossed in it as to forget the spiritual future.

وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَقُولُ...

201. And there are men who say:

202.



أُولَـئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُواْ وَاللّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٢٠٢)

202. To these will be allotted what they have earned, and Allah is quick in account.

C225. Our spiritual account is counting up, both on the debit and credit side. In worldly accounts, both our profits and our losses may be delayed. But in Allah's books there is no delay. Our actions go before us.

(See 2:95, n. 100).

وَاذْكُرُواْ اللّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ...

203. Celebrate the praises of Allah during the Appointed Days,

C226. The Appointed Days: the three days after the tenth, when the pilgrims stay on in the Valley of Mina for prayer and praise.

They are the days of Tashriq (see 2:200, n. 223). It is optional for pilgrims to leave on the second or third day.

... فَمَن تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلاَ إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَن تَأَخَّرَ فَلا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَى ...

but if anyone hastens to leave in two days, there is no blame on him, and if anyone stays on, there is no blame on him, if his aim is to do right.

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢٠٣)

Then fear Allah, and know that ye will surely be gathered unto Him.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

204. There is the type of man whose speech about this world's life may dazzle thee,

C227. The two contrasted types of men mentioned in 2:200 and 201 are here further particularized:

the glib hypocrite who appears worldly-wise but plans harm, contrasted with the sincere believer who is prepared to suffer martyrdom for his faith.

The Commentators give names of people who exemplified these types.

- The mischief maker has a smooth tongue and indulges in plausible talk with many oaths. He appears to be worldly-wise, and though you may despise him for his worldliness, you may not realise his frauds. Behind your back he is an implacable enemy. He stirs up quarrels, and causes all sorts of mischief to you or your friends. He can never win Allah's love, and we are warned against his tricks.

... وَيُشْهِدُ اللّهَ عَلَى مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ (٢٠٤)

and he calls Allah to witness about what is in his heart; yet is he the most contentious of enemies.

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَى فِي الأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ...

205. When he turns his back, his aim everywhere is to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle.

... وَاللّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ الفَسَادَ (٢٠٥)

But Allah loveth not mischief.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالإِثْمِ...

206. When it is said to him, "Fear Allah," he is led by arrogance to (more) crime.

... فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (٢٠٦)

Enough for him is Hell; an evil bed indeed (to lie on)!

C228. According to the English saying,

"As you have made your bed, so you must lie in it."

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاء مَرْضَاتِ اللّهِ...

207. And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of Allah;

... وَاللّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (٢٠٧)

and Allah is full of kindness to (His) devotees.

C229. This second type of man,

- firm, sincere, devoted, willing to give his life for the faith that is in him - was common in early Islam.

  Such men were its pillars. Through persecution, obloquy, torture, threat to their own lives or the lives of those dear to them, they stood by their leader, and many of them gave their lives. That is what established Islam.

We are asked in the next verse to follow this type and shun the other or evil type. If we do that, our Cause is safe.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ادْخُلُواْ فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ...

208. O ye who believe! enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Evil One;

... إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٢٠٨)

for he is to you an avowed enemy.

فَإِن زَلَلْتُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءتْكُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٠٩)

209. If ye backslide after the clear (signs) have come to you, then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

C230. If you backslide after the conviction has been brought home to you, you may cause some inconvenience to the Cause, or to those who counted upon you, but do not be so arrogant as to suppose that you will defeat Allah's Power and Wisdom. The loss will be your own.

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلاَّ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلآئِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الأَمْرُ...

210. Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled?

... وَإِلَى اللّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (٢١٠)

But to Allah do all questions go back (for decision).

C231. If faith is wanting, all sorts of excuses are made to resist the appeal of Allah. They might and do say:

"Oh yes! we shall believe if Allah appears to us with His angels in His glory!"

In other words they want to settle the question in their way, and not in Allah's way.

That will not do. The decision in all questions belongs to Allah. If we are true to Him, we wait for His times and seasons, and do not expect Him to wait on ours.

Section 26

سَلْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُم مِّنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ ...

211. Ask the Children of Israel how many Clear (Signs) We have sent them.

C232. The Israelites under Moses were shown Allah's glory and many clear Signs and yet they went after their own ways, and preferred their own whims and fancies. So do people in all ages.

But let them not deceive themselves. Allah's justice is sure, and when it comes, it will be strict and unmistakable to those who reject His grace.

... وَمَن يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢١١)

But if anyone, after Allah's favor has come to him, substitutes (something else), Allah is strict in punishment.

C233. Cf. 2:196 (end) where the question was of those who do not fear Allah.

Here the question is of those who reject Allah's Signs.

زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ...

212. The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they scoff at those who believe.

... وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَواْ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

But the righteous will be above them on the Day of Resurrection;

... وَاللّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاء بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٢١٢)

for Allah bestows His abundance without measures on whom He will.

C234. Allah's gifts in this world seem unequal, and sometimes those get them who seem to deserve them least.

Allah's bounty in unlimited to the just as well as the unjust. In His wisdom He may give to whomsoever He pleases. The account is not taken now, but will be taken in the end, when the balance will be redressed.

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ...

213. Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings;

... وَأَنزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُواْ فِيهِ...

and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed;

... وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ...

but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy.

... فَهَدَى اللّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لِمَا اخْتَلَفُواْ فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ...

Allah by His Grace guided the believers to the truth, concerning that wherein they differed.

... وَاللّهُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٢١٣)

For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُواْ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُم مَّثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْاْ مِن قَبْلِكُم ...

214. Or do ye think that ye shall enter the Garden (of Bliss) without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you?

... مَّسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاء وَالضَّرَّاء وَزُلْزِلُواْ...

They encountered suffering and adversity, and were so shaken in spirit

... حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللّهِ ...

that even the Messenger and those of faith who were with him cried: "When (will come) the help of Allah?"

... أَلا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللّهِ قَرِيبٌ (٢١٤)

Ah! verily, the help of Allah is (always) near!

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ ...

215. They ask thee what they should spend (in charity).

... قُلْ مَا أَنفَقْتُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ...

Say:

Whatever ye spend that is good,

- is for parents and
- kindred and
- orphans and
- those in want and for wayfarers.

C235. Three questions arise in charity:

- What shall we give?
- to whom shall we give? and
- how shall we give?

The answer is here.

Give anything that is good, useful, helpful, valuable. It may be property or money; it may be a helping hand; it may be advice; it may be a kind word; "whatever ye do that is good" is charity.

On the other hand, if you throw away what is useless, there is no charity in it.

Or if you give something with a harmful intent, e.g., a sword to a madman, or a drug or sweets or even money to someone whom you want to entrap or corrupt, it is no charity but a gift of damnation.

To whom should you give?

It may be tempting to earn the world's praise by a gift that will be talked about, but are you meeting the needs of those who have the first claim on you?

If you are not, you are like a person who defrauds creditors: it is no charity.

Every gift is judged by its unselfish character: the degree of need or claim is a factor which you should consider; if you disregard it, there is something selfish behind it.

How should it be given?

As in the sight of Allah; thus shuts out all pretence, show, and insincerity.

... وَمَا تَفْعَلُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (٢١٥)

And whatever ye do that is good, Allah knoweth it well.

... كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ

216. Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it.

C236. To fight in the cause of Truth is one of the highest form of charity. What can you offer that is more precious than your own life?

But here again the limitations come in. If you are a mere brawler, or a selfish aggressive person, or a vainglorious bully, you deserve the highest censure. Allah knows the value of things better than you do. (R).

... وَعَسَى أن تَكْرَهُواْ شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ...

But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you

... وَعَسَى أن تُحِبُّواْ شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ...

and that ye love a thing which is bad for you.

... وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢١٦)

But Allah knoweth, and ye know not.

Section 27

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ...

217. They ask thee concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month.

C237. Prohibited Month: See 2:194, n. 209.

... قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ...

Say: "Fighting therein is a grave (offence);

... وَصَدٌّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِندَ اللّهِ...

but graver is it in the sight of Allah to prevent access to the path of Allah,

to deny Him,

to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque,

and drive out its members.

C238. The intolerance and persecution of the Pagan clique at Makkah caused untold hardships to the holy Messenger of Islam and his early disciples. They bore all with meekness and long-suffering patience until the holy one permitted them to take up arms in self-defence. Then they were twitted with breach of the custom about Prohibited Months, though they were driven to fight during that period against their own feeling in self defence.

But their enemies not only forced them to engage in actual warfare, but interfered with their conscience, persecuted them and their families, openly insulted and denied Allah, kept out the Muslim Arabs from the Sacred Mosque, and exiled them. Such violence and intolerance are deservedly called worse than slaughter.

... وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ...

Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter.

C239. Cf. 2:191, 193, where a similar phrase occurs.

Fitnah: trial, temptation, as in 2:102; or tumult, sedition, oppression, as here;

Mawlvi Muhammad Ali, Hafiz Sarwar, and M Pickthall translate "persecution" in this passage, which is also legitimate, seeing that persecution is the suppression of some opinion by violence, force, or threats.

... وَلاَ يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّىَ يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَن دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُواْ...

Nor will they cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith if they can.

... وَمَن يَرْتَدِدْ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ ...

And if any of you turn back from their faith and die in unbelief,

... فَأُوْلَـئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ...

their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the Hereafter;

... وَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢١٧)

they will be Companions of the Fire and will abide therein.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ وَجَاهَدُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

218. Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah,

... أُوْلَـئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللّهِ وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢١٨)

they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah; and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ ...

219. They ask thee concerning wine

C240. Wine: Khamr: literally understood to mean the fermented juice of the grape; applied by analogy to all fermented liquor, and by further analogy to any intoxicating liquor or drug.

There may possible be some benefit in it, but the harm is greater than the benefit, especially if we look at it from a social as well as an individual point of view.

... وَالْمَيْسِرِ...

and gambling.

C241. Gambling: maisir: literally, a means of getting something too easily, getting a profit without working for it; hence gambling. That is the principle on which gambling is prohibited.

The form must familiar to the Arabs was gambling by casting lots by means of arrows, on the principle of a lottery: the arrows were marked, and served the same purpose as a modern lottery ticket.

Something e.g., the carcass of a slaughtered animal, was divided into unequal parts. The marked arrows were drawn from a bag. Some were blank and those who drew them got nothing. Others indicated prizes, which were big or small. Whether you got a big share or a small share, or nothing, depended on pure luck, unless that was fraud also on the part of some persons concerned.

The principle on which the objection is based is:

- that, even if there is no fraud, you gain what you have not earned, or lose on a mere chance.

  Dice and wagering are rightly held to be within the definition of gambling. (R).

... قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَآ أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا...

Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit."

... وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ...

They ask thee how much they are to spend;

... قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ...

say: "What is beyond your needs."

C242. Hoarding is no use either to ourselves, or to any one else. We should use the wealth we need; any superfluities we must spend in good works or in charity.

... كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١٩)

Thus doth Allah make clear to you His Signs: in order that ye may consider.

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ...

220. (Their bearings) on this life and the Hereafter.

C243. Gambling and intemperance are social as well as individual sins. They may ruin us in our ordinary every-day worldly life, as well as our spiritual future.

In case it is suggested that there is no harm in a little indulgence, we are asked to think over all its aspects, social and individual, - worldly and spiritual.

... وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَى...

They ask thee concerning orphans.

C244. For Orphans the best rule is to keep their property, household, and accounts separate, lest there should be any temptation to get a personal advantage to their guardian by mixing them with the guardian's property, household accounts-also to keep clear of any ideas of marriage, where this fiduciary relation exist.

Quran 6:152 may possibly suggest complete separation. But it may be an economy and an advantage to the orphan to have his property and accounts administered with guardian's property and accounts and to have him live in the guardian's household, or to marry into the guardian's family, especially where the orphan's property is small and he or she has no other friend.

The test is:

what is best in the orphan's interest?

If the guardian does fall into temptation, even if human law does not detect him, he is told he is sinning in Allah's sight and that should keep him straight.

... قُلْ إِصْلاَحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ...

Say:

"The best thing to do is what is for their good; if ye mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren;

... وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ...

but Allah knows the man who means mischief from the man who means good.

... وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ لأَعْنَتَكُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٢٠)

And if Allah had wished, He could have put you into difficulties:

He is indeed Exalted in Power, Wise."

C245. The idea in Islam is not to make Allah's Law a burdensome fetter, but to ease a man's path in all kinds of difficult situations by putting him on his honour and trusting him.

The strictest probity is demanded of him, but if he falls short of it, he is told that he cannot escape Allah's punishment even though he may evade human punishment.

وَلاَ تَنكِحُواْ الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنَّ...

221. Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe;

C245a. Literally "Pagan".

... وَلأَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ...

a slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allure you.

C245a. Literally "Pagan".

... وَلاَ تُنكِحُواْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنُواْ...

Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe:

C245a. Literally "Pagan".

... وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ...

a man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allure you.

C246. Marriage is a most intimate communion, and the mystery of sex finds its highest fulfilment when intimate spiritual harmony is combined with the physical link. If religion is at all a real influence in life to both parties or to either party, a difference in this vital matter must affect the lives of both more profoundly than differences of birth, race, language, or position in life. It is therefore only right that the parties to be married should have the same spiritual outlook. If two person love each other, their outlook in the highest things of life must be the same.

Note that religion is not here a mere label or a matter of custom or birth. The two persons may have been born in different religions, but if, by their mutual influence, they come to see the truth in the same way, they must openly accept the same rites and the same social brotherhood. Otherwise the position will become impossible individually and socially.

... أُوْلَـئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللّهُ يَدْعُوَ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ...

Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the fire. But Allah beckons by His grace to the Garden (of Bliss) and forgiveness,

... وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٢١)

and makes His Signs clear to mankind: that they may receive admonition..

Section 28

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ...

222. They ask thee concerning women's courses.

... قُلْ هُوَ أَذًى ...

Say:

They are a hurt and a pollution;

C247. Adhan: hurt, pollution.

Both aspects must be remembered. Physical cleanliness and purity make for health, bodily and spiritual. But the matter should be looked at from the woman's point of view as well as the man's. To her there is danger of hurt, and she should have every consideration.

In the animal world, instinct is a guide which is obeyed. Man should in this respect be better: he is often worse.

... فَاعْتَزِلُواْ النِّسَاء فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلاَ تَقْرَبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىَ يَطْهُرْنَ...

so keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean.

... فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ ...

But when they have purified themselves ye may approach them in any manner, time, or place ordained for you by Allah.

C248. Haythu: A comprehensive word referring to manner, time, or place.

The most delicate matters are here referred to in the most discreet and yet helpful terms.

In sex morality, manner, time, and place are all important: and the highest standards are set by social laws, by our own refined instinct of mutual consideration, and above all, by the light shed by the highest Teachers form the wisdom which they receive from our Maker, Who loves purity and cleanliness in all things.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ (٢٢٢)

For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.

... نِسَآؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ وَقَدِّمُوا لأَنفُسِكُمْ

223. Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will. But do some good act for your souls beforehand;

C249. Sex is not a thing to be ashamed of, or to be treated lightly, or to be indulged to excess.

It is as solemn a fact as any in life. It is compared to a husbandman's tilth; it is a serious affair to him; he sows the seed in order to reap the harvest. But he chooses his own time and mode of cultivation. He does not sow out of season nor cultivate in a manner which will injure or exhaust the soul. He is wise and considerate and does not run riot.

Coming from the simile to human beings, every kind of mutual consideration is required, but above all, we must remember that even in these matters there is a spiritual aspect. We must never forget our souls, and that we are responsible to Allah.

It was carnal-minded men who invented the doctrine of original sin:

"Behold," says the Psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5).

This is entirely repudiated by Islam, in which the office of father and mother is held in the highest venerations. Every child of pure love is born pure. Celibacy is not necessarily a virtue, and may be a vice.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُم مُّلَاقُوهُ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٢٣)

and fear Allah, and know that ye are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give (these) good tidings to those who believe.

C250. Our highest spiritual ambition should be the hope of meeting Allah. To uphold such a hope is to give glad tidings to people of faith. It would only be unrepentant sinners who would fear the meeting.

Note how the most sensuous matters are discussed frankly, and immediately taken up into the loftiest regions of spiritual upliftment.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِّأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ...

224. And make not Allah's (name) an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons;

... وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٢٤)

for Allah is one who heareth and knoweth all things.

C251. The Arabs had many special kinds of oaths, for each of which they had a special name in their language. Some of them related to sex matters, and caused misunderstanding, alienation, division, or separation between husband and wife. This and the following three verses refer to them.

In 2:224 we are first of all told in perfectly general terms that we are not to make an oath in the name of Allah an excuse for not doing the right thing when it is pointed out to us, or for refraining from doing something which will bring people together.

If we were swayed by anger or passion or mere caprice, Allah knows our inmost hearts, and right conduct and not obstinacy or quibbling is what He demands from us.

لاَّ يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيَ أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِن يُؤَاخِذُكُم بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ...

225. Allah will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts;

C252. It has been held that thoughtless oaths, if there is no intention behind them, can be expiated by an act of charity.

... وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (٢٢٥)

and He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

لِّلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِن نِّسَآئِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ ...

226. For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives, a waiting for four months is ordained;

... فَإِنْ فَآؤُوا فَإِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٢٦)

if then they return, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَإِنْ عَزَمُواْ الطَّلاَقَ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٢٧)

227. But if their intention is firm for divorce, Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

C253. Verses 225-227 should be read together with verse 224. The latter, though it is perfectly general, leads up to the other three.

The Pagans Arabs had a custom very unfair to women in wedlock, and this was suppressed by Islam. Sometimes, in a fit of anger or caprice, a husband would take an oath by Allah not to approach his wife. This deprived her of conjugal rights, but at the same time kept her tied to him indefinitely, so that she could not marry again. If the husband was remonstrated with, he would say that his oath by Allah bound him.

Islam in the first place disapproved of thoughtless oaths, but insisted on proper solemn intentional oaths being

scrupulously observed. In a serious matter like that affecting a wife, if the oath was put forward as an excuse, the man is told that is not excuse at all. Allah looks to intention, not mere thoughtless words.

Reconciliation is recommended, but if they are really determined against reconciliation, it is unfair to keep them tied indefinitely. (R)

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلاثَةَ قُرُوَءٍ...

228. Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods,

... وَلاَ يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَن يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ ...

nor is it lawful for them, to hide what Allah hath created in their wombs,

... إِن كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

if they have faith in Allah and the Last Day.

... وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُواْ إِصْلاَحًا...

And their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation.

C254. Islam tries to maintain the married state as far as possible, especially where children are concerned, but it is against the restriction of the liberty of men and women in such vitally important matters as love and family life. It will check hasty action as far as possible and leave the door to reconciliation open at many stages.

Even after divorce a suggestion of reconciliation is made, subject to certain precautions (mentioned in the following verses) against thoughtless action. A period of waiting (iddah) for three monthly courses is prescribed, in order to see if the marriage conditionally dissolved is likely to result in issue. But this is not necessary where the divorced woman is a virgin: 33:49.

It is definitely declared that women and men shall have similar rights against each other.

... وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ...

And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable;

... وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٢٨)

but men have a degree (of advantage) over them and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

C255. The difference in economic position between the sexes makes the man's rights and liabilities a little greater than the woman's.

Quran 4:34 refers to the duty of the man to maintain the woman, and to a certain difference in nature between the sexes. Subject to this, the sexes are on terms of equality in law, and in certain matters the weaker sex is entitled to special protection.

Section 29

الطَّلاَقُ مَرَّتَانِ ...

229. A divorce is only permissible twice:

C256. Where divorce for mutual incompatibility is allowed, there is danger that the parties might act hastily, then repent, and again wish to separate. To prevent such capricious action repeatedly, a limit is prescribed.

Two divorces (with a reconciliation between) are allowed. After that the parties must definitely make up their minds, either to dissolve their union permanently, or to live honourable lives together in mutual love and forbearance - to "hold together on equitable terms", neither party worrying the other nor grumbling or evading the duties and responsibilities of marriage.

... فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ ...

after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms or separate with kindness.

C257. If a separation is inevitable, the parties should not throw mud at each other, but recognise what is right and honourable on a consideration of all the circumstances.

In any case a man is not allowed to ask back for any gifts or property he may have given to the wife. This is for the protection of the economically weaker sex.

Lest that protective provision itself work against the woman's freedom, an exception is made in the next clause.

... وَلاَ يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَن تَأْخُذُواْ مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلاَّ أَن يَخَافَا أَلاَّ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللّهِ...

It is not lawful for you, (men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah.

C258. All other prohibitions and limits prescribed here are in the interest of good and honourable lives for both sides, and in the interests of a clean and honourable social life, without public or private scandals.

If there is any fear that in safeguarding her economic rights, her very freedom of person may suffer, the husband refusing the dissolution of marriage, and perhaps treating her with cruelty, then, in such exceptional cases, it is permissible to give some material consideration to the husband, but the need and equity of this should be submitted to the judgment of impartial judges, i.e., properly constituted courts.

A divorce of this kind is called *khula*'.

... فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلاَّ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللّهِ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ...

If ye (judges) do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom.

... تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللّهِ فَلاَ تَعْتَدُوهَا...

These are the limits ordained by Allah;

... وَمَن يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللّهِ فَأُوْلـئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٢٩)

so do not transgress them. If any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons wrong (themselves as well as others).

C259. Wrong (themselves as well as others)**:**

Zalimun: for the root meaning of zulm see n. 51. 2:35.

فَإِن طَلَّقَهَا ...

230. So if a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably),

C260. This is in continuation of the first sentence of 2:229.

Two divorces followed by re-union are permissible; the third time the divorce becomes irrevocable, until the woman marries some other man and he divorces her. This is to set an almost impossible condition. The lesson is: if a man loves a woman he should not allow a sudden gust of temper or anger to induce him to take hasty action. What happens after two divorces, if the man takes her back?

See n. 261 to 2:231.

... فَلاَ تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِن بَعْدُ حَتَّىَ تَنكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ...

he cannot, after that, remarry her until after she has married another husband

... فَإِن طَلَّقَهَا فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَن يَتَرَاجَعَا إِن ظَنَّا أَن يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللّهِ ...

and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them if they reunite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by Allah.

... وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٠)

Such are the limits ordained by Allah, which He makes plain to those who understand.

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاء فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ...

231. When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their ('Iddah), either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms;

C261. If the man takes back his wife after two divorces, he must do so only on equitable terms, i.e., he must not put pressure on the woman to prejudice her rights in any way, and they must live clean and honourable lives, respecting each other's personalities. There are here two conditional clauses:

1. when ye divorce women, and
2. when they fulfil their Iddah: followed by two consequential clauses,
3. take them back on equitable terms, or
4. set them free with kindness.

The first is connected with the third and the second with the fourth. Therefore if the husband wishes to resume the marital relations, he need not wait for Iddah.

But if he does not so wish, she is free to marry someone else after Iddah. For the meaning of *Iddah* see n. 254 above.

... وَلاَ تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُواْ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ...

but do not take them back to injure them or to take undue advantage; if anyone does that, He wrongs his own soul.

C262. Let no one think that the liberty given to him can be used for his own selfish ends. If he uses the law for the injury of the weaker party, his own moral and spiritual nature suffers.

... وَلاَ تَتَّخِذُوَاْ آيَاتِ اللّهِ هُزُوًا...

Do not treat Allah's Signs as a jest,

C263. These difficult questions of sex relations are often treated as a joke. But they profoundly affect our individual lives, the lives of our children, and the purity and well-being of the society in which we live.

This aspect of the question is reiterated again and again.

... وَاذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتَ اللّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أنزلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُم بِهِ...

but solemnly rehearse Allah's favors on you, and the fact that He sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, for your instruction.

C264. Rehearse: zikr. Cf. 2:152 and n. 156.

We are asked to remember in our own minds, and to proclaim and praise, and be proud of Allah's favours on us.

His favours are immeasurable; not the least are His Revelations, and the wisdom which He has given to us to enable us to judge and act up to His guidance.

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٣١)

And fear Allah, and know that Allah is well acquainted with all things.

Section 30

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاء فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلاَ تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَن يَنكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْاْ بَيْنَهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

232. When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their ('Iddah), do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands, if they mutually agree on equitable terms.

C265. The termination of a marriage bond is a most serious matter for family and social life. And every lawful divorce is approved which can equitable bring back those who have lived together, provided only there is mutual love and they can live on honourable terms with each other. If these conditions are fulfilled, it is not right for outsiders to prevent or hinder re-union. They may be swayed by property or other considerations.

This verse was occasioned by an actual case that was referred to the holy Apostle in his lifetime.

... ذَلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ مِنكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ ...

This instruction is for all amongst you, who believe in Allah and the Last Day.

... ذَلِكُمْ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٢)

That is (the course making for) most virtue and purity amongst you, and Allah knows, and ye know not.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلاَدَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَن يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ...

233. The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires, to complete the term.

C266. As this comes in the midst of the regulations on divorce, it applies primarily to cases of divorce, where some definite rule is necessary, as the father and mother would not, on account of the divorce, probably be on good terms, and the interests of the children must be safeguarded.

As, however, the wording is perfectly general, it has been held that the principle applies equally to the father and mother in wedlock: each must fulfil his or her part in the fostering of the child.

On the other hand, it is provided that the child shall not be used as an excuse for driving a hard bargain on either side. By mutual consent they can agree to some source that is reasonable and equitable, both as regards the period before weaning (the maximum being two years) and the engagement of a wet-nurse, or (by analogy) for artificial feeding.

But the mother's privileges must not be curtailed simply because by mutual consent she does not nurse the baby. In a matter of this kind the ultimate appeal must be to godliness, for all legal remedies are imperfect and may be misused.

... وَعلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms.

C266a. i.e. in case of divorce. [Eds}.

... لاَ تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا...

No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear.

... لاَ تُضَآرَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلاَ مَوْلُودٌ لَّهُ بِوَلَدِهِ...

No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child.

... وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ ...

An heir shall be chargeable in the same way

... فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالاً عَن تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا...

if they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them.

... وَإِنْ أَرَدتُّمْ أَن تَسْتَرْضِعُواْ أَوْلاَدَكُمْ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُم مَّآ آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

If ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered, on equitable terms.

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٣٣)

But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what ye do.

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا...

234. If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days:

C267. The '*Iddah* of widowhood (four months and ten days) is longer than the 'Iddah of divorce (three monthly courses, 2:228).

In the latter the only consideration is to ascertain if there is any unborn issues of the marriage dissolved. This is clear from 33:49, where it is laid down that there is no 'Iddah for virgin divorces.

In the former there is in addition the consideration of mourning and respect for the deceased husband.

In either case, if it is proved that there is unborn issue, there is of course no question of remarriage for the woman until it is born and for a reasonable time afterwards.

Meanwhile here maintenance on a reasonable scale is chargeable to the late husband or his estate.

... فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ...

when they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner.

... وَاللّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٢٣٤)

And Allah is well acquainted with what ye do.

وَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُم بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَاء أَوْ أَكْنَنتُمْ فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ...

235. There is no blame on you if ye make an offer of betrothal or hold it in your hearts.

C268. A definite contract of remarriage for the woman during her period of *'Iddah* of widowhood is forbidden as obviously unseemly, as also any secrecy in such matters. It would bind the woman at a time when she is not fitted to exercise her fullest judgment.

But circumstances may arise when an offer (open for future consideration but not immediately decided), may be to her interests, and this is permissible. (R).

... عَلِمَ اللّهُ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَـكِن لاَّ تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًّا إِلاَّ أَن تَقُولُواْ قَوْلاً مَّعْرُوفًا...

Allah knows that ye cherish them in your hearts: but do not make a secret contract with them except in terms honorable,

... وَلاَ تَعْزِمُواْ عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّىَ يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ...

nor resolve on the tie of marriage till the term prescribed is fulfilled.

... وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُ...

And know that Allah knoweth what is in your hearts and take heed of Him;

... وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (٢٣٥)

and know that Allah is Oft Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

Section 31

لاَّ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِن طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاء مَا لَمْ تَمَسُّوهُنُّ أَوْ تَفْرِضُواْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً...

236. There is no blame on you if ye divorce women before consummation or the fixation of their dower;

... وَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ ...

but bestow on them (a suitable gift),

... عَلَى الْمُوسِعِ قَدَرُهُ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدْرُهُ ...

the wealthy according to his means, and the poor according to his means;

... مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٢٣٦)

a gift of a reasonable amount is due from those who wish to do the right thing.

... وَإِن طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَمَسُّوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ...

237. And if ye divorce them before consummation, but after the fixation of a dower for them,

... فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلاَّ أَن يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوَ ...

then the half of the dower (is due to them), unless they remit it. Or (the man's half) is remitted

C269. The law declares that in such a case half the dower fixed shall be paid by the man to the woman.

But it is open to the woman to remit the half due to her or to the man to remit the half which he is entitled to deduct, and thus pay the whole.

... الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ...

by him in whose hands is the marriage tie;

C270. Him in whose hands is the marriage tie: According to Hanafi doctrine this is the husband himself, who can ordinarily by his act dissolve the marriage. It therefore behoves him to be all the more liberal to the

woman and pay her the full dower even if the marriage was not consummated.

... وَأَن تَعْفُواْ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَلاَ تَنسَوُاْ الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ...

and the remission (of the man's half) is the nearest to righteousness. And do not forget liberality between yourselves.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٣٧)

For Allah sees well all that ye do.

... حَافِظُواْ عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ والصَّلاَةِ الْوُسْطَى ...

238. Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the middle prayer,

C271. The Middle Prayer: Salutulk-wusfa: may be translated "the best or the most excellent prayer."

Authorities differ as to the exact meaning of this phrase. The weight of authorities seems to be in favour of interpreting this as the 'Asr prayer in the middle of the afternoon. This is apt to be most neglected, and yet this is the most necessary, to remind us of Allah in the midst of our worldly affairs. (R).

... وَقُومُواْ لِلّهِ قَانِتِينَ (٢٣٨)

and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind).

...فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالاً أَوْ رُكْبَانًا

239. If ye fear (an enemy), pray on foot, or riding (as may be most convenient),

C272. Verses 238-339 are parenthetical, introducing the subject of prayer in danger.

This is more fully dealt with in 4:101-103.

... فَإِذَا أَمِنتُمْ فَاذْكُرُواْ اللّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُواْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٩)

but when ye are in security, celebrate Allah's praises in the manner He has taught you, which ye knew not (before).

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا...

240. Those of you who die and leave widows

... وَصِيَّةً لِّأَزْوَاجِهِم مَّتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ...

should bequeath for their widows a year's maintenance and residence;

C273. Opinions differ whether the provision (of a year's maintenance, with residence) for a widow is abrogated by the share which the widow gets (one-eighth or one-fourth) as an heir (4:12).

I do not think it is.

The bequest (where made takes effect as a charge on the property, but the widow can leave the house before the year is out, and presumably the maintenance then ceases.

... فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِيَ أَنفُسِهِنَّ مِن مَّعْرُوفٍ...

but if they leave (the residence), there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves, provided it is reasonable,

... وَاللّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٤٠)

and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

وَلِلْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...

241. For divorced women maintenance (should be provided) on a reasonable (scale).

... حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ (٢٤١)

This is a duty on the righteous.

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٢٤٢)

242. Thus doth Allah make clear His Signs to you: in order that ye may understand.

C.51 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:243-253)

Fighting in defence of Truth and Right
Is not to be undertaken lightheartedly,
Nor to be evaded as a duty.
Life and Death are in the hands of Allah.
Not all can be chosen to fight
For Allah. It requires constancy,
Firmness, and faith. Given these,
Large armies can be routed
By those who battle for Allah,
As shown by the courage of David,
Whose prowess single-handedly
Disposed of the Philistines.
The mission of some of the messengers,
Like Jesus, was different-
Less wide in scope than that
Of Mustafa, and He carries it out
As He wills.

Section 32

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُواْ مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ...

243. Didst thou not turn thy vision to those who abandoned their homes, though they were thousands (in number), for fear of death?

... فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللّهُ مُوتُواْ ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ...

Allah said to them: "Die." Then He restored them to life.

C274. We now return to the subject of Jihad, which we left at n. 214-216.

We are to be under no illusion about it. If we are not prepared to fight for our faith, with our lives and all our resources, both our lives and our resources will be wiped out by our enemies.

As to life, Allah gave it, and a coward is not likely to save it. It has happened again and again in history that men who tamely submitted to be driven from their homes although they were more numerous than their enemies had the sentence of death pronounced on them for their cowardice, and they deserved it. But Allah gives further and further chances in His mercy. This is a lesson to every generation.

The Commentators differ as to the exact episode referred to, but the wording is perfectly general, and so is the lesson to be learnt from it.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَشْكُرُونَ (٢٤٣)

For Allah is full of bounty to mankind, but most of them are ungrateful.

وَقَاتِلُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٤٤)

244. Then fight in the Cause of Allah, and know that Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

C275. For Allah's cause we must fight, but never to satisfy our own selfish passions or greed, for the warning is repeated:

"God heareth and knoweth all things" all deeds, words and motives are perfectly open before Him, however we might conceal them from men or even from ourselves.

See 2:216, n. 236.

مَّن ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ...

245. Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan,

C276. Spending in the cause of Allah is called metaphorically "a beautiful loan".

It is excellent in many ways:

- it shows a beautiful spirit of self-denial;
- in other loans there may be a doubt as to the safety of your capital or any return thereon; here you give in the Lord of All, in Whose hands are the keys of want or plenty;

  giving you may have manifold blessings, and withholding you may even lose what you have.

If we remember that our goal is Allah, can we turn away from His cause?

... فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً ...

which Allah will double unto his credit and multiply many times?

... وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٤٥)

It is Allah that giveth (you) want or plenty, and to Him shall be your return.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ مِن بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِن بَعْدِ مُوسَى ...

246. Hast thou not turned thy vision to the chiefs of the children of Israel after (the time of) Moses?

C277. The next generation after Moses and Aaron was ruled by Joshua, who crossed the Jordan and settled the tribes in Palestine. His rule lasted for 25 years, after which there was a period of 320 years when the Israelites had a chequered history. They were not united among themselves, and suffered many reverses at the hands of the Midianites, Amalekites and other tribes of Palestine.

They frequently lapsed into idolatry and deserted the worship of the true Allah. From time to time a leader appeared among them who assumed dictatorial powers. Acting under a sort of theocratic commission from Allah, he pointed out their backsliding, re-united them under His banner, and restored, from time to time and place to place, the power of Israel.

These dictators are called Judges in the English translation of the Old Testament. The last of their line was Samuel, who marks the transition towards the line of Kings on the one hand and of the later Prophets on the other. He may be dated approximately about the 11th century B.C.

... إِذْ قَالُواْ لِنَبِيٍّ لَّهُمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُّقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

They said to a Prophet (that was) among them: "Appoint for us a king, that we may fight in the Cause of Allah."

C278. This was Samuel. In his time Israel had suffered from much corruption within and many reverses without. The Philistines had made a great attack and defeated Israel with great slaughter.

The Israelites, instead of relying on Faith and their own valour and cohesion, brought out their most sacred possession, the Ark of the Covenant, to help them in the fight. But the enemy captured it, carried it away, and retained it for seven months.

The Israelites forgot that wickedness cannot screen itself behind a sacred relic. Nor can a sacred relic help the enemies of faith. The enemy found that the Ark brought nothing but misfortune for themselves, and were glad to abandon it.

It apparently remained twenty years in the village (qarya) of Yaarim (Kirjath-jeafim): I. Samuel, 7:2.

Meanwhile the people pressed Samuel to appoint them a king. They thought that a king would cure all their ills, whereas what was wanting was a spirit of union and discipline and a readiness on their part to fight in the cause of Allah.

... قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِن كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلاَّ تُقَاتِلُواْ...

He said: "Is it not possible if ye were commanded to fight, that ye will not fight?"

C279. Samuel knew as a Prophet that the people were fickle and only wanted to cover their own want of union and true spirit by asking for a king.

They replied with spirit in words, but when it came to action, they failed. They hid themselves in caves and rocks, or ran away, and even those who remained "followed him trembling": I. Samuel, 13:6-7.

... قَالُواْ وَمَا لَنَا أَلاَّ نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِن دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَآئِنَا...

They said: "How could we refuse to fight in the Cause of Allah, seeing that we were turned out of our homes and our families?"

... فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْاْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّنْهُمْ ...

But when they were commanded to fight, they turned back, except a small band among them.

... وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٢٤٦)

But Allah has full knowledge of those who do wrong.

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا...

247. Their Prophet said to them: "Allah hath appointed Talut as king over you."

C280. Talut is the Arabic name for Saul, who was tall and handsome, but belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel. His worldly belongings were slender, and it was when he went out to search for some asses which had been lost from his father's house that he met Samuel and was anointed king by him.

The people's fickleness appeared immediately he was named. They raised all sorts of petty objections to him. The chief consideration in their minds was selfishness: each one wanted to be leader and king himself, instead of desiring sincerely the good of the people as a whole, as a leader should do.

... قَالُوَاْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ...

They say: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted with wealth in abundance?"

... قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ...

He said: "Allah hath chosen him above you, and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess;

... وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ...

Allah granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth.

... وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٤٧)

Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things."

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ ...

248. And (further) their Prophet said to them: "A sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the Covenant,

C281. Ark of the Covenant: Tabut: a chest of acacia wood covered and lined with pure gold, about 6ft x 3ft x 3ft. See Exod 25:10-22.

It was to contain the "testimony of Allah", or the Ten Commandments engraved on stone, with relics of Moses and Aaron. Its Gold lid was to be the "Mercy Seat" with two cherubims of beaten gold, with wings outstretched. This was a sacred possession to Israel. It was lost to the enemy in the early part of Samuel's ministry; see n. 278 to 2:246; when it came back, it remained in a village for twenty years and was apparently taken to the capital when kingship was instituted. It thus became a symbol of unity and authority. (R).

... فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

with (an assurance) therein of security from your Lord,

C282. Security sakina: safety, tranquility, peace.

Later Jewish writings use the same word for a symbol of Allah's Glory in the Tabernacle or tent in which the Ark was kept, or in the Temple when it was built by Solomon.

... وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَى وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَآئِكَةُ...

and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by angels.

C283. Carried by angels: these words refer to the Tabut or Ark, (R).

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٢٤٨)

In this is a Symbol for you if ye indeed have faith."

Section 33

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُم بِنَهَرٍ...

249. When Talut set forth with the armies, he said: "Allah will test you at the stream;

C284. A Commander is hampered by a large force if it is not in perfect discipline and does not whole-heartedly believe in its Commander. He must get rid of all the doubtful ones, as did Gideon before Saul, and Henry V. in Shakespeare's story long afterwards.

Saul used the same test as Gideon; he gave a certain order when crossing a stream; the greater part disobeyed, and were sent back.

Gideon's story will be found in Judges, 7:2-7.

... فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلاَّ مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ...

if any drinks of its water, he goes not with my army; only those who taste not of it go with me; a mere sip out of the hand is excused."

... فَشَرِبُواْ مِنْهُ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّنْهُمْ ...

But they all drank of it, except a few.

... فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَعَهُ قَالُواْ لاَ طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ...

When they crossed the river, he and the faithful ones with him, they said: "This day we cannot cope with Goliath and his forces."

C285. Even in the small band that remained faithful, there were some who were appalled by the number of the enemy when they met him face to face, and saw the

size and strength of the enemy Commander, the giant Goliath (Jalut).

But there was a very small band who were determined to face all odds because they had perfect confidence in God and in the cause for which they were fighting. They were for making a firm stand and seeking Allah's help. Of that number was David;

see next note.

... قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلَاقُو اللَّهِ ...

But those who were convinced that they must meet Allah, said:

... كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

"How oft, by Allah's will, hath a small force vanquished a big one?

... وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٢٤٩)

Allah is with those who steadfastly persevere."

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا...

250. When they advanced to meet Goliath and his forces, they prayed:

... رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٥٠)

"Our Lord! pour out constancy on us and make our steps firm; help us against those that reject faith."

فَهَزَمُوهُم بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ...

251. By Allah's will they routed them: and David slew Goliath;

C286. Note how the whole story is compressed into a few words as regards narration, but its spiritual lessons are dwelt upon from many points of view.

The Old Testament is mainly interested in the narrative, which is full of detail, but says little about the universal truths of which every true story is a parable.

The Quran assumes the story, but tells the parable.

David was a raw youth, with no arms or armour. He was not known even in the Israelite camp, and the giant Goliath mocked him.

Even David's own elder brother chide him for deserting the sheep, for he was a poor shepherded lad to outward appearance, but his faith had made him more than a match for the Philistine hosts. When Saul offered his own armour and arms to David, the young hero declined, as he had not tried them, while his shepherd's sling and staff were his well-tried implements. He picked up five smooth pebbles on the spot from the stream, and used his sling to such effect that he knocked down Goliath. He then used Goliath's own sword to slay him. There was consternation in the Philistine army: they broke and fled, and were pursued and cut to pieces.

Apart from the main lesson that if we would preserve our national existence and our faith it is our duty to fight with courage and firmness, there are other lessons in David' story:

1. Numbers do not count, but faith, determination and the blessing of Allah;
2. size and strength are of no avail against truth, courage, and careful planning;
3. the hero tries his own weapons, and rhose that are available to him at the time and place, even though people may laugh at him;
4. if Allah is with us, the enemy's weapon may become an instrument of his own destruction;
5. personality conquers all dangers, and puts heart into our own wavering friends;
6. pure faith brings Allah's reward, which may take many forms; in David's case it was Power, Wisdom, and other gifts; see next note.

... وَآتَاهُ اللّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاء...

and Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever (else) He willed.

C287. David was not only a shepherd, a warrior, a king, a wise man, and a prophet, but was also endowed with the gifts of poetry and music. (R).

... وَلَوْلاَ دَفْعُ اللّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الأَرْضُ...

And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief,

... وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٥١)

but Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds.

C288. Allah's plan is universal. He loves and protects all His creatures and His bounties are for all worlds (1:2, n. 20).

To protect one He may have to check another, but we must never lose faith that His love is for all in boundless measure.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ...

252. These are the signs of Allah; We rehearse them to thee in truth:

... وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٢٥٢)

verily thou art one of the apostles.

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ...

253. Those apostles We endowed with gifts, some above others:

C289. Different gifts and different modes of procedure are prescribed to Allah's Prophets in different ages, and perhaps their degrees are different through it is not for us mortals, with our imperfect knowledge to make any difference between one and another of Allah's Prophets (2:136).

As this winds up the argument about fighting, three illustrations are given from the past, how it affected Allah's Messengers.

- To Moses Allah spoke in clouds of glory; he led his men for forty years through the wilderness, mainly fighting against the unbelief of his own people; he organized them to fight with the sword for Palestine,

but was raised to Allah's mercy before his enterprise ripened, and it fell to Joshua to carry out his plan.

- David, though a mere shepherd boy, was chosen by Allah. He overthrew the greatest warrior of his time, became a king, and waged successful wars, being also a prophet, a poet, and a musician.
- Jesus was "strengthened with the holy spirit' he was given no weapons to fight and his mission was of a more limited character.
- In Muhammad's mission these and other characters were combined. Gentler than Jesus, he organized on a vaster scale than Moses and from Madinah he ruled and gave laws and the Quran has a vaster scope than the Psalms of David.

... مِّنْهُم مَّن كَلَّمَ اللّهُ ...

to one of them Allah spoke;

C290. Moses: see note above.

... وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ ...

others He raised to degrees (of honor);

C291. There is a two-fold sense:

- they were raised to high posts of honour,
- and they rose by degrees.

I take the reference to be to David.

... وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ...

to Jesus the son of Mary, We gave clear (Signs),

C292. Cf. 2:87. See n. 401 to 3:62.

and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.

C292a. "Holy Spirit" according to commentators signifies Gabriel. [Eds]

... وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِن بَعْدِهِم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ...

If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other, after clear (Signs) had come to them,

... وَلَـكِنِ اخْتَلَفُواْ فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُم مَّن كَفَرَ...

but they (chose) to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting.

... وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُواْ وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ (٢٥٣)

If Allah had so willed, they would not have fought each other; but Allah fulfilleth His plan.

C293. If some power of choice was to be given to man, his selfishness inevitably caused divisions. It must not be supposed that it frustrates God's Plan. He carries it out as He will.

C.52 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:254-283)

Who can describe the nature of Allah?
The Living, the Eternal; His Throne
Extends over worlds and worlds
That no imagination can compass.
His truth is clear as daylight; how
Can compulsion advance religion?
The keys of Life and Death, and the mysteries
Of everything around us, are in His hands.
Our duty then is to seek path
Of goodness, kindness, upright
Conduct and Charity- to grasp
At no advantage from a brother's need,
To stand by the word that is pledged,
To bear true witness, and remove all cause
Of misunderstandings in our dealings
As between man and man.

Section 34

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ...

254. O ye who believe!

... أَنفِقُواْ ...

spend out of (the bounties)

C294. Spend, i.e., give away in charity, or employ in good works, but do not hoard.

Good works would in Islam include everything that advances the good of one that is in need whether a neighbor or a stranger or that advances the good of the community or even the good of the person himself to whom Allah has given the bounty.

But it must be real good and there should be no admixture of baser motives, such as vainglory, or false indulgence, or encouragement of idleness, or playing off one person against another.

The bounties include mental and spiritual gifts as well as wealth and material gifts.

... مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لاَّ بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلاَ خُلَّةٌ وَلاَ شَفَاعَةٌ...

We have provided for you, before the day comes when no bargaining (will avail), nor friendship, nor intercession.

C295. Cf. 2:123 and 2:48.

... وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٥٤)

Those who reject faith, they are the wrongdoers.

اللّهُ لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ...

255. Allah! there is no god but He, the living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal.

C296. This is the *Ayah al Kursi* the "Verse of the Throne".

Who can translate its glorious meaning, or reproduce the rhythm of its well-chosen and comprehensive words. Even in the original Arabic the meaning seems to be greater than can be expressed in words.

The attributes of Allah are different from anything we know in our present world; He lives, but His life is self-subsisting and eternal: it does not depend upon other beings and is not limited to time and space.

Perhaps the attribute of Qayyum includes not only the idea of "Self-subsisting" but also the idea of "Keeping up and maintaining all life."

His life being the source and constant support of all derived forms of life. Perfect life is perfect activity, in contrast to the imperfect life which we see around us, which is not only subject to death but to the need for rest or slowed-down activity, (something which is between activity and sleep, for which I, in common with other translators, have used the word "slumber") and the need for full sleep itself.

But Allah has no need for rest or sleep. His activity, like His life, is perfect and self-subsisting. Contrast with this the expressions used in Psalms 78:65;

"Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine." (R).

... لاَ تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلاَ نَوْمٌ ...

No slumber can seize him nor sleep.

... لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ ...

His are all things in the heavens and on earth.

... مَن ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِهِ ...

Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth?

... يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ...

He knoweth what (appeareth to his creatures as) before or after or behind them.

C297. After we realise that His life is absolute Life. His Being is absolute Being, while others are contingent and evanescent our ideas of heaven and earth vanish like shadows. What is behind that shadow is He.

Such reality as our heavens and our earth possess is a reflection of His absolute Reality.

The pantheist places the wrong accent when he says that everything is He. The truth is better expressed when we say that everything is His.

How then can any creatures stand before Him as of right, and claim to intercede for a fellow-creature? In the first place both are His, and He cares as much for one as for the other.

In the second place, they are both dependent on His will and command. But He in His Wisdom and Plan may grade his creatures and give one superiority over another. Then by His will and permission such a one may intercede or help according to the laws and duties laid on him.

Allah's knowledge is absolute, and is not conditioned by Time or Space. To us, His creatures, these conditions always apply. His knowledge and our knowledge are therefore in different categories, and our knowledge only gets some reflection of Reality when it accords with His Will and Plan.

... وَلاَ يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلاَّ بِمَا شَاء...

Nor shall they compass aught of his knowledge except as He willeth.

... وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ ...

His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth,

C298. Throne; seat, power, knowledge, symbol of authority.

In our thoughts we exhaust everything when we say "the heavens and the earth".

Well, then in everything is the working of Allah's power, and will, and authority. Everything of course includes spiritual things as well as things of sense. (R).

... وَلاَ يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا...

and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them.

C299. A life of activity that is imperfect or relative would not only need rest for carrying on its own activities, but would be in need of double rest when it has to look after and guard, or cherish, or help other activities.

In contrast with this is the Absolute Life, which is free from any such need or contingency. For it is supreme above anything that we can conceive.

... وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (٢٥٥)

For He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).

لاَ إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ...

256. Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error;

C300. Compulsion is incompatible with religion; because;

1. religion depends upon faith and will, and these would be meaningless if induced by force;
2. Truth and Error have been so clearly shown up by the mercy of Allah that there should be no doubt in the minds of any persons of goodwill as to the fundamentals of faith;
3. Allah's protection is continuous and His Plan is always to lead us from the depths of darkness into the clearest light.

... فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لاَ انفِصَامَ لَهَا...

whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks.

C301. Hand-hold: something which the hands can grasp for safety in a moment of danger. It may be a loop or a handle, or anchor.

If it is without flaw, so that there is no danger of breaking, our safety is absolutely assured so long as we hold fast to it. Our safety then depends on our own will and faith; Allah's help and protection will always be unfailing if we hold firmly to Allah and trust in Him.

... وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٥٦)

And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

اللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ...

257. Allah is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light.

... وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَآؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ...

Of those who reject faith the patrons are the Evil Ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness.

... أُوْلَـٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٥٧)

they will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (for ever).

Section 35

... أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَآجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رِبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ

258. Hast thou not turned thy vision to one who disputed with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had granted him power?

C302. The three verses 258-360 have been the subject of much controversy as to the exact meaning to be attached to the incidents and the precise persons alluded to, whose names are not mentioned.

Mawlvi Muhammad Ali's learned notes give some indication of the points at issue. In such matters, where the Quran has given no names and the Holy Prophet has himself given no indication, it seems to me useless to speculate, and still worse to put forward positive opinions.

In questions of learning, speculations are often interesting. But it seems to me that the meaning of the

Quran is so wide and universal that we are in danger of missing the real and eternal meaning if we go on disputing about minor points.

All three incidents are such as may happen again and again in any prophet's lifetime, and be seen in impersonal vision at any time. Here they are connected with Mustafa's vision as shown by the opening words of verse 258. (R).

... إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِـي وَيُمِيتُ...

Abraham said: "My Lord is He Who Giveth life and death."

... قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِـي وَأُمِيتُ...

He said: "I give life and death."

... قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ...

Said Abraham: "But it is Allah that causeth the sun to rise from the East, do thou then cause him to rise from the West."

... فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ...

Thus was he confounded who (in arrogance) rejected faith.

... وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٥٨)

Nor doth Allah give guidance to a people unjust.

C303. The first point illustrated is the pride of power, and the impotence of human power as against Allah's power.

The person who disputed with Abraham may have been Nimrod or some ruler in Babylonia, or indeed elsewhere. I name Babylonia as it was the original home of Abraham (Ur of the Chaldees), and Babylon prided herself on her arts and sciences in the ancient world.

Science can do many wonderful things; it could then; it can now. But the mystery of Life baffled science then, as it continues to baffle science now, after many centuries of progress.

Abraham had faith and referred back everything to the true Cause of Causes.

A skeptical ruler might jestingly say:

"I have the power of life and death".

A man of science might say:

"We have investigated the laws of life and death."

Different kinds of powers lie in the hands of kings and men of knowledge. The claim in both cases is true in a very limited sense. But Abraham confounded the claimer by going back to fundamentals.

"If you had the ultimate power, why could you not make the sun rise from the West?"

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا...

259. Or (take) the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs.

C304. This incident is referred variously;

1. to Ezekiel's vision of dry bones (Ezekiel, 37:1-10).
2. to Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem in ruins after the Captivity, and to its re-building (Nehemiah, 2:12-20): and
3. to Uzair, or Ezra, or Esdras, the scribe, priest, and reformer, who was sent by the Persian King after the Captivity to Jerusalem, and about whom there are many Jewish legends.

As to 1, there are only four words in this verse about bones.

As to 2 and 3, there is nothing specific to connect this verse with either.

The wording is perfectly general, and we must understand it as general. I think it does refer not only to individual, but to national, death, and resurrection.

... قَالَ أَنَّىٰ يُحْيِي هَٰذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

He said: "Oh! how shall Allah bring it (ever) to life, after (this) its death?"

... فَأَمَاتَهُ اللّهُ مِئَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ...

But Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up (again). He said: "How long didst thou tarry (thus)?"

... قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ...

He said: "(Perhaps) a day or part of a day."

... قَالَ بَل لَّبِثْتَ مِئَةَ عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ...

He said: "Nay, thou hast tarried thus a hundred years; but look at thy food and thy drink; they show no signs of age;

... وَانظُرْ إِلَى حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ...

and look at thy donkey: and that We may make of thee a Sign unto the people,

... وَانظُرْ إِلَى العِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا...

look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh!

C305. A man is in despair when he sees the destruction of a whole people, city, or civilization. But Allah can cause resurrection, as He has done many times in history, and as He will do at the final Resurrection.

Time is nothing before Allah. The doubter thinks that he has been dead or "tarried thus" a day or less when the period has been a century. On the other hand, the food and drink which he left behind is intact, and as fresh as it was when he left it. But the donkey is not only dead, but nothing but bones is left of it. And before the man's eyes, the bones are reunited, clothed with flesh and blood, and restored to life.

Moral:

- Time is nothing to Allah;
- it affects different things in different ways;
- The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands;
- Man's power is nothing; his faith should be in Allah.

... فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٥٩)

When this was shown clearly to him he said: "I know that Allah hath power over all things."

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى ...

260. Behold! Abraham said: "My Lord! show me how thou givest life to the dead.

C306. Verse 258, we saw, illustrated by Allah's power over Life and Death, contrasted with man's vain boasts or imaginings.

Verse 259 illustrated how Time is immaterial to Allah's working; things, individuals and nations are subject to laws of life and death, which are under Allah's complete control, however much we may be misled by appearances. (R).

... قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِن...

He said: "Dost thou not then believe?"

... قَالَ بَلَى وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي...

He said: "Yea! but to satisfy my own understanding."

C307. Abraham had complete faith in Allah's power, but he wanted, with Allah's permission, to give an explanation of that faith to his own heart and mind.

Where I have translated "satisfy my own understanding", the literal translation would be "satisfy my own heart".

... قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ...

He said: "Take four birds; tame them to turn to thee;

... ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا...

put a portion of them on every hill, and call to them; they will come to thee (flying) with speed.

C308. A portion of them: Juzan.

The Commentators understand this to mean that the birds were to be cut up and pieces of them were to be

put on the hills. The cutting up or killing is not mentioned, but they say that it is implied by an ellipsis, as the question is how Allah gives life to the dead. (R).

... وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٦٠)

Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise."

Section 36

مَّثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

261. The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah

... كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ مِّئَةُ حَبَّةٍ ...

is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears, and each ear hath a hundred grains.

... وَاللّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَن يَشَاء وَاللّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٦١)

Allah giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth; and Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

262. Those who spend their substance in the Cause of Allah,

... ثُمَّ لاَ يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنفَقُواْ مَنًّا وَلاَ أَذًى لَّهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ...

and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury,

for them their reward is with their Lord;

... وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٢٦٢)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّن صَدَقَةٍ يَتْبَعُهَآ أَذًى...

263. Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury. Allah is free of all wants,

C309. A very high standard is set for **charity**.

1. It must be in the way of Allah.

2. It must expect no reward in this world.
3. It must not be followed by references or reminders to the act of charity.
4. Still less should any annoyance or injury be caused to the recipient; e.g. by boasting that the giver relieved the person in the hour of need.

Indeed, the kindness and the spirit which turns a blind eye to other people's faults or short-comings is the essence of charity: these things are better than charity if charity is spoilt by tricks that do harm.

At the same time, while no reward is to be expected, there is abundant reward from Allah -material, moral, and spiritual- according to His own good pleasure and plan.

If we spend in the way of Allah, it is not as if Allah was in need of our charity. On the contrary our short-comings are so great that we require His utmost forbearance before any good that we can do can merit His praise or reward. Our motives are so mixed that our best may really be very poor if judged by a very strict standard.

... وَاللّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ (٢٦٣)

and He is Most Forbearing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تُبْطِلُواْ صَدَقَاتِكُم بِالْمَنِّ وَالأذَى...

264. O ye who believe!

cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury,

... كَالَّذِي يُنفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاء النَّاسِ وَلاَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ ...

like those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in Allah nor in the last day.

C310. False charity, "to be seen of men", is really no charity. It is worse, for it betokens a disbelief in Allah and the Hereafter.

"Allah seeth well whatever ye do" (2:265).

It is compared to a hard barren rock on which by chance has fallen a little soil. Good rain, which renders fertile soil more fruitful, washes away the little soil which this rock had, and exposes its nakedness. What good can hypocrites derive even from the little wealth they may have amassed?

... فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا...

They are in Parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil; on it falls heavy rain, which leaves it (just) a bare stone.

... لاَ يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُواْ ...

They will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned.

... وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٦٤)

And Allah guideth not those who reject faith.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاء مَرْضَاتِ اللّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ...

265. And the likeness of those who spend their substance, seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls,

... كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ...

is as a garden, high and fertile: heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest, and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it.

C311. True charity is like a field with good soil on a high situation. It catches good showers of rain, the moisture penetrates the soil, and yet its elevated situation keeps it well-drained, and healthy favorable conditions increase its output enormously. But supposing even that the rain is not abundant, it catches dew and makes the most of any little moisture it can get, and that is sufficient for it.

So a man of true charity is spiritually healthy; he is best suited to attract the bounties of Allah, which he does not hoard selfishly but circulates freely. In lean times he still produces good works, and is content with what he has. He looks to Allah's pleasure and the strengthening of his own soul.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٦٥)

Allah seeth well whatever ye do.

أَيَوَدُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ...

266. Does any of you wish that he should have a garden with date-palms and vines

C312. The truly spiritual nature of charity having been explained in three parables (2:261, 264, 265) a fourth parable is now added, explaining its bearing on the whole of our life.

Suppose we had a beautiful garden well-watered and fertile, with delightful views of streams, and a haven of rest for mind and body; suppose old age were creeping in on us, and our children were either too young to look after themselves or too feeble in health; how should we feel if a sudden whirlwind came with lightning or fire in its train, and burnt it up; thus blasting the whole of our hopes for the present and for the future, and destroying the result of all our labor and savings in the past?

Well, this life of ours is a probation. We may work hard, we may save, we may have good luck. We may make ourselves a goodly pleasance, and have ample means of support for ourselves and our children. A great whirlwind charged with lightning and fire comes and burns up the whole show.

We are too old to begin again: our children are too young or feeble to help us to repair the mischief. Our chance is lost, because we did not provide against such a contingency.

The whirlwind is the "wrath to come" the provision against it is a life of true charity and righteousness, which is the only source of true and lasting happiness in this world and the next. Without it we are subject to all the vicissitudes of this uncertain life. We may even spoil our so-called "charity" by insisting on the obligation which others owe to us or by doing some harm, because our motives are not pure.

... تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ...

and streams flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruit,

... وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَاء...

while he is stricken with old age, and his children are not strong (enough to look after themselves)

C313. Not strong (enough): dhu'afa-u: literally weak, decrepit, inform, possibly referring to both health and will or character.

... فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ...

that it should be caught in a whirlwind, with fire therein and be burnt up?

... كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّهُ لَكُمُ الآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢٦٦)

thus doth Allah make clear to you (His) signs; that ye may consider.

Section 37

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ

267. O ye who believe!

... أَنفِقُواْ مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُم مِّنَ الأَرْضِ...

give of the good things which ye have (honorably) earned, and of the fruits of the earth which We have produced for you,

C314. According to the English proverb "Charity covers a multitude of sins". Such a sentiment is strongly disapproved in Islam.

Charity has value only if;

- something good and valuable is given,
- which has been honorably earned or acquired by the giver, or
- which is produced in nature and can be referred to as a bounty of Allah.

1. may include such things as are of use and value to others though they may be of less use to us or superfluous to us on account of our having acquired something more suitable for our station in life; for example, discarded clothes, or an old horse or a used motor car;

   but if the horse is vicious, or the car engine so far gone that it is dangerous to use, then the gift is worse than useless; it is positively harmful and the giver is a wrong-doer.

2. applies to fraudulent company-promoters, who earn great credit by giving away charity in some of their ill-gotten gains, or to robbers (even if they call themselves by high-sounding names) who "rob peter to pay Pauo".

   Islam will have nothing to do with tainted property. Its economic code requires that every gain should be honest and honorable. Even "charity" would not cover or destroy the taint.

3. lays down a test in cases of a doubtful gain.

   Can we refer to it as a gift of God?

   Obviously the produce of honest labour or agriculture can be so referred to.

   In modern commerce and speculation there is much of quite the contrary character, and charity will not cover the taint. Some kind of art, skill, or talent are God-given: it is the highest kind of charity to teach them or share their product.

   Others are the contrary: they are bad or tainted. In the same way some professions or services may be tainted, if these tend to do moral harm.

وَلاَ تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنفِقُونَ ...

and do not even aim at getting anything which is bad, in order that out of it ye may give away something,

C315. The preceding note tries to indicate some of the things which are bad or tainted. We should not even

think of acquiring them for ourselves, soothing our conscience by the salve that we shall practice charity out of them.

... وَلَسْتُم بِآخِذِيهِ إِلاَّ أَن تُغْمِضُواْ فِيهِ ...

when ye yourselves would not receive it except with closed eyes.

C316. Closed eyes imply disgust or connivance because of some feature which we would not openly acknowledge.

... وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ (٢٦٧)

And know that Allah is free of all wants, and worthy of all praise.

C317. To dedicate tainted things to Allah is a dishonor to Allah, Who is independent of all wants, and Who is worthy of all honor and praise.

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاء...

268. The Evil One threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly.

... وَاللّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلاً...

Allah promiseth you His forgiveness and bounties

C318. Good and evil draw us opposite ways and by opposite motives, and the contrast is well marked out in charity.

When we think of doing some real act of kindness or charity, we are assailed with doubts and fear of impoverishment; but Evil supports any tendency to selfishness, greed, or even to extravagant expenditure for show, or self-indulgence, or unseemly appetites.

On the other hand, Allah draws us on to all that is kind and good, for that way lies the forgiveness of our sins, and greater real prosperity and satisfaction.

No kind or generous act ever ruined anyone. It is false generosity that is sometimes shown as leading to ruin. As Allah knows all our motives and cares for all, and has everything in His power, it is obvious which course a wise man will choose.

But wisdom is rare, and it is only wisdom that can appreciate true well-being and distinguish it from the false appearance of well-being.

... وَاللّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٦٨)

and Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things.

يُؤتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَن يَشَاء وَمَن يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا...

269. He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing;

... وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلاَّ أُوْلُواْ الأَلْبَابِ (٢٦٩)

but none will grasp the message but men of understanding.

وَمَا أَنفَقْتُم مِّن نَّفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُم مِّن نَّذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ...

270. And whatever ye spend in charity or devotion, be sure Allah knows it all.

... وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنصَارٍ (٢٧٠)

But the wrongdoers have no helpers.

إِن تُبْدُواْ الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ ...

271. If ye disclose (acts of) charity, even so it is well,

C319. It is better to seek no publicity in charity. But if it is known there is no harm. If it is for public purposes, it must necessarily be known, and a pedantic show of concealment may itself be a fault.

The harm of publicity lies in motives of ostentation. We can better reach the really deserving poor by quietly seeking for them. The spiritual benefit ensures to our own souls, provided our motives are pure, and we are really seeking the good pleasure of Allah.

... وَإِن تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاء فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنكُم مِّن سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ ...

but if ye conceal them, and make them reach those (really) in need, that is best for you: it will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil.

... وَاللّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٢٧١)

And Allah is well acquainted with what ye do.

لَّيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء...

272. It is not required of thee (O Messenger), to set them on the right path, but Allah sets on the right path whom He pleaseth.

C320. In connection with charity this means that we must relieve those really in need, whether they are good or bad, on the right path or not, Muslims or otherwise. It is not for us to judge in these matters. Allah will give light according to His wisdom.

Incidentally it adds a further meaning to the command, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256). For compulsion may not only be by force, but by economic necessity.

In matters of religion we must not even compel by a bribe of charity. The chief motive in charity should be Allah's pleasure and our own spiritual good. This was addressed in the first instance to Mustafa in Madinah, but it is of universal application.

... وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلأنفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنفِقُونَ إِلاَّ ابْتِغَاء وَجْهِ اللّهِ...

Whatever of good ye give benefits your own souls, and ye shall only do so seeking the "Face" of Allah.

C321. See note to 2:112.

Wajh means literally: face, countenance; hence, favour, glory, Self, Presence.

... وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تُظْلَمُونَ (٢٧٢)

Whatever good ye give, shall be rendered back to you, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.

لِلْفُقَرَاء الَّذِينَ أُحصِرُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ لاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الأَرْضِ...

273. (Charity is) for those in need, who, in Allah's cause, are restricted (from travel), and cannot move about in the land, seeking (for trade or work).

C322. Indiscriminate acts of so-called charity are condemned as they may do more harm than good (see 2:262).

The real beneficiaries of charity are here indicated. They must be in want. And the want must be due to some honorable cause. For example, they may be doing some unpaid service, such as teaching, or acquiring knowledge or skill, or be in exile for their faith, or in other ways be prevented from seeking employment or doing strenuous work.

"Allah's cause" must not be narrowly interpreted. All sincere and real service to humanity comes within the definition, as well as actual devotion to religion or to the righteous Imam. Such men do not beg from door to door. It is the duty of those who are well-to-do, or of the Public Purse, to find them out. (R).

... يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاء مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُم بِسِيمَاهُمْ...

The ignorant man thinks, because of their modesty, that they are free from want. Thou shalt know them by their (unfailing) mark:

... لاَ يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا...

they beg not importunately from all and sundry.

... وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (٢٧٣)

And whatever of good ye give, be assured Allah knoweth it well.

Section 38

الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلاَنِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ...

274. Those who (in charity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord:

C323. We recapitulate the beauty of charity (i.e. unselfish giving of one's self or one's goods) before we come to its opposite, i.e. the selfish grasping greed of usury against those in need or distress.

Charity instead of impoverishing you will enrich you; you will have more happiness and less fear. Contrast it with what follows, - the degradation of the grasping usurer.

... وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٢٧٤)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا ...

275. Those who devour usury

C324. Usury is condemned and prohibited in the strongest possible terms. There can be no question about the prohibition.

When we come to the definition of Usury there is room for difference of opinion. 'Umar, according to Ibn Kathir, felt some difficulty in the matter, as the Prophet left this world before the details of the question were settled. This was one of the three questions on which he wished he had more light from the Prophet, the other two being Khilafah and Kalalah (see 4:12 n. 518).

Our 'Ulama, ancient and modern, have worked out a great body of literature on Usury, based mainly on economic conditions as they existed at the rise of Islam. (R).

... لاَ يَقُومُونَ إِلاَّ كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ...

will not stand except as stands one whom the Evil One by his touch hath driven to madness.

C325. An apt simile: whereas legitimate trade or industry increases the prosperity and stability of men and nations, a dependence on Usury would merely encourage a race of idlers, cruel blood-suckers, and worthless fellows who do not know their own good and are therefore akin to madmen.

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا...

That is because they say: "Trade is like usury",

but Allah hath permitted trade and forbidden usury.

C326. Owing to the fact that interest occupies a central position in modern economic life, and specially since interest is the very life blood of the existing financial institutions, a number of Muslims have been inclined to interpret it in a manner which is radically different from the understanding of Muslim scholars throughout the last fourteen centuries and is also sharply in conflict with the categorical statements of the Prophet (peace be on him).

According to Islamic teachings any excess on the capital is *riba* (interest). Islam accepts no distinction, insofar as prohibition is concerned, between reasonable and exorbitant rates of interest, and thus what came to be regarded as the difference between usury, and interest; not between returns on bonus for consumption and those for production purposes and so on. [Eds]

... فَمَن جَاءهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَانتَهَىَ فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللّهِ...

Those who, after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge);

... وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٧٥)

but those who repeat (the offence) are companions of the fire: they will abide therein (for ever).

يَمْحَقُ اللّهُ الْرِّبَا وَيُرْبِي الصَّدَقَاتِ...

276. Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity:

... وَاللّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ (٢٧٦)

for He loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَوُاْ الزَّكَاةَ...

277. Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity,

... لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٢٧٧)

will have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

C327. The contrast between charity and unlawful grasping of wealth began at 2:274, where this phrase

occurs as a theme. Here the theme finishes with the same phrase.

The following four verses refer to further concessions on behalf of debtors, as creditors are asked to;

a. give up even claims arising out of the past on account of usury, and

b. give time for payment of capital if necessary, or

c. to write off the debt altogether as an act of charity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَذَرُواْ مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٢٧٨)

278. O ye who believe! fear Allah, and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if ye are indeed believers.

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُواْ فَأْذَنُواْ بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...

279. If ye do it not, take notice of war from Allah and His Messenger:

C328. This is not war for opinions, but an ultimatum of war for the liberation of debtors unjustly dealt with and oppressed.

... وَإِن تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُؤُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لاَ تَظْلِمُونَ وَلاَ تُظْلَمُونَ (٢٧٩)

but if ye turn back, ye shall have your capital sums; deal not unjustly, and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly.

وَإِن كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَى مَيْسَرَةٍ ...

280. If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay.

... وَأَن تَصَدَّقُواْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٨٠)

But if ye remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if ye only knew.

وَاتَّقُواْ يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللّهِ ...

281. And fear the day when ye shall be brought back to Allah.

... ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُونَ (٢٨١)

Then shall every soul be paid what it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

Section 39

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

282. O ye who believe!

... إِذَا تَدَايَنتُم بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ...

when ye deal with each other, in transactions involving future obligations in a fixed period of time, reduce them to writing.

C329. The first part of the verse deals with transactions involving future payment or future consideration, and the second part with transactions in which payment and delivery are made on the spot.

Examples of the former are if goods are bought now and payment is promised at a fixed time and place in the future, or if cash is paid now and delivery is contracted for at a fixed time and place in the future. In such cases a written document is recommended, but it is held that the words later on in this verse, that it is "juster . . . more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts", etc. imply that it is not obligatory in law.

Examples of the latter kind - cash payment and delivery on the spot - require no evidence in writing, but apparently oral witnesses to such transactions are recommended.

... وَلْيَكْتُب بَّيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ...

Let a scribe write down faithfully as between the parties:

... وَلاَ يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللّهُ ...

let not the scribe refuse to write, as Allah has taught him,

C330. The scribe in such matters assumes a fiduciary capacity: he should therefore remember to act as in the presence of Allah, with full justice to both parties. The art of writing he should look upon as a gift from Allah, and he should use it as in His service.

In an illiterate population the scribe's position is still more responsible.

... فَلْيَكْتُبْ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلاَ يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا...

so let him write. Let him who incurs the liability dictate, but let him fear his Lord Allah,

and not diminish aught of what he owes.

... فَإِن كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا...

If the party liable is mentally deficient, or weak,

... أَوْ لاَ يَسْتَطِيعُ أَن يُمِلَّ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ...

or unable himself to dictate, let his guardian dictate faithfully.

C331. Possibly the person "mentally deficient, or weak, or unable to dictate", may also be incapable of making a valid contract, and the whole duty would be on his guardian, who again must act in perfect good faith, not only protecting but vigilantly promoting the interests of his ward.

... وَاسْتَشْهِدُواْ شَهِيدَيْنِ من رِّجَالِكُمْ...

And get two witnesses, out of your own men,

C332. It is desirable that the men (or women) who are chosen as witness should be from the circle to which the parties belong, as they would best be able to understand the transaction, and be most easily available if their evidence is required in future.

... فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ...

and if there are not two men, then a man and two women,

... مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاء أَن تَضِلَّ إْحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الأُخْرَى...

such as ye choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her.

... وَلاَ يَأْبَ الشُّهَدَاء إِذَا مَا دُعُواْ...

The witnesses should not refuse when they are called on (for evidence).

... وَلاَ تَسْأَمُوْاْ أَن تَكْتُبُوْهُ صَغِيرًا أَو كَبِيرًا إِلَى أَجَلِهِ...

Disdain not to reduce to writing (your contract) for a future period, whether it be small or big:

... ذَلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِندَ اللّهِ وَأَقْومُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَى أَلاَّ تَرْتَابُواْ...

it is juster in the sight of Allah, more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves;

... إِلاَّ أَن تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلاَّ تَكْتُبُوهَا...

but if it be a transaction which ye carry out on the spot among yourselves, there is no blame on you if ye reduce it not to writing.

... وَأَشْهِدُواْ إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلاَ يُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلاَ شَهِيدٌ...

But take witnesses whenever ye make a commercial contract; and let neither scribe nor witness suffer harm.

... وَإِن تَفْعَلُواْ فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ ...

If ye do (such harm), it would be wickedness in you.

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللّهُ وَاللّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٨٢)

So fear Allah; for it is Allah that teaches you. And Allah is well acquainted with all things.

C333. Commercial morality is here taught on the highest plane and yet in the most practical manner, both as regards the bargains to be made, the evidence to be provided, the doubts to be avoided, and the duties and rights of scribes and witnesses.

Probity even in worldly matters is to be, not a mere matter of convenience or policy, but a matter of conscience and religious duty. Even our every-day transactions are to be carried out as in the presence of Allah.

وَإِن كُنتُمْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُواْ كَاتِبًا فَرِهَانٌ مَّقْبُوضَةٌ ...

283. If ye are on a journey, and cannot find a scribe, a pledge with possession (may serve the purpose).

C334. A pledge or security stands on its own independent footing, though it is a very convenient form of closing the bargain where the parties cannot trust each other, and cannot get a written agreement with proper witnesses.

... فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي اؤْتُمِنَ أَمَانَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ ...

And if one of you deposits a thing on trust with another, let the trustee (faithfully) discharge his trust, and let him fear his Lord.

C335. The law of Deposit implies great trust in the Depositary on the part of the Depositor.

The Depositary becomes a trustee, and the doctrine of Trust can be further developed on that basis. The trustee's duty is to guard the interests of the person on whose behalf he holds the trust and to render back the property and accounts when required according to the terms of the trust.

This duty again is linked to the sanction of Religion, which requires a higher standard than Law.

... وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَن يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ ...

Conceal not evidence; for whoever conceals it, his heart is tainted with sin.

C336. It sometimes happens that if some inconvenient piece of evidence is destroyed or concealed, we gain a great advantage materially. We are warned not to yield to such a temptation.

The concealment of evidence has a serious effect on our own moral and spiritual life, for it taints the very source of higher life, as typified by the heart.

The heart is also the seat of our secrets. We are told that the sin will reach our most secret being, though the sin may not be visible or open to the world. Further, the heart is in the seat of our affections, and false dealing taints all our affections.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ (٢٨٣)

And Allah knoweth all that ye do.

C.53 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(2:284-286)

Our honesty and upright conduct
Are not mere matters of policy
Or convenience; all our life in this world
Must be lived as in the presence of Allah.
The finest example of Faith we have
In the Prophet's life; full of faith.
Let us render willing obedience
To Allah's Will, Our responsibility
Though great, is not a burden
Greater than we can bear; let us
Pray for Allah's assistance, and He will help.

Section 40

لِّلَّهِ ما فِي السَّمَاواتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

284. To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth.

... وَإِن تُبْدُواْ مَا فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ يُحَاسِبْكُم بِهِ اللّهُ...

Whether ye show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah calleth you to account for it. .

... فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاء...

He forgiveth whom He pleasant, and punisheth whom He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things.

... وَاللّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٨٤)

For Allah hath power over all things.

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِن رَّبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ...

285. The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith.

... كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَآئِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ...

Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His Messengers.

C337. This Surah started with the question of Faith (2:3-4), showed us various aspects of Faith and the denial of Faith, gave us ordinances for the new People of Islam as a community, and now rounds off the argument again with a confession of Faith and of its practical manifestation in conduct ("we hear and we obey"), and closes on a note of humility, so that we may confess our sins, ask for forgiveness, and pray for Allah's help and guidance.

... لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّن رُّسُلِهِ...

"We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His Messengers."

C338. Cf. 2:136 and 2:253, n. 289.

It is not for us to make any distinction between one and another of Allah's Prophets: we must honor them all equally, though we know that God in His wisdom sent them with different kinds of mission and gave them different degrees of rank.

... وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا...

And they say: "We hear, and we obey:

... غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٢٨٥)

(we seek) Thy forgiveness, Our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."

C339. When our faith and conduct are sincere, we realize how far from perfection we are, and we humbly pray to Allah for the forgiveness of our sins.

We feel that Allah imposes no burden on us that we cannot bear, and with this realization in our hearts and

in the confession of our lips, we go to Him and ask for His help and guidance.

لاَ يُكَلِّفُ اللّهُ نَفْسًا إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا...

286. On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear.

C340. Cf. 2:233. In that verse the burden was in terms of material wealth: here it is in terms of spiritual duty.

Assured by Allah that He will accept from each soul just such duty as it has the ability to offer, we pray further on for the fulfillment of that promise.

... لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ ...

It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray):

... رَبَّنَا لاَ تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِن نَّسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا...

"Our Lord! condemn us not if we forget or fall into error;

... رَبَّنَا وَلاَ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِنَا...

our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us;

C341. We must not be arrogant, and think that because Allah has granted us His favor and mercy we have no need to exert ourselves, or that we are ourselves superior to those before us.

On the contrary, knowing how much they failed, we pray that our burdens should be lightened, and we confess our realization that we have all the greater need for Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

And so we end the whole argument of the Surah with a prayer for Allah's help, not in our own selfish ends, but in our resolve to uphold God's truth against all Unbelief.

... رَبَّنَا وَلاَ تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لاَ طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ...

our Lord! lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear.

... وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَآ...

Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us.

... أَنتَ مَوْلاَنَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٨٦)

Thou art our Protector; help us against those who stand against Faith."





The Absolute Reality



Allah! there is no Allah but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Ali 'Imran

آلَ عِمْرَانَ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is cognate to Surah 2, but the matter is here treated from a different point of view. The reference to Badr (Ramadan A.H. 2) and Uhud (Shawwal A.H. 3) give a clue to the dates of those passages.

Like Surah 2, it takes a general view of the religious history of mankind, with special reference to the people of the Book, proceeds to explain the birth of the new people of Islam and their ordinances, insists on the need of struggle and fighting in the cause of Truth, and exhorts those who have been blessed

with Islam to remain constant in Faith, pray for guidance, and maintain their spiritual hope for the future.

The new points of view developed are:

1. The emphasis is here laid on he duty of the Christians to accept the new light; the Christians are here specially appealed to, as the Jews were specially appealed to in the last Surah;
2. The lessons of the battles of Badr and Uhud are set out for the Muslim community; and
3. the responsibilities of that community are insisted on both internally and in their relations to those outside.

Summary- Allah having revealed His Book, confirming previous revelations, we must accept it in all reverence, try to understand its meaning, and reject the base motives which make truth unacceptable to those who reject Faith (3:1-20, and C 54).

The People of the Book had only a portion of the Book, and if they reject the complete Book, the People of Faith must part company with them, and their day is done (3:21-30, and C. 55).

The story of the family of ʻImran (the father of Moses) leads us from the Mosaic Dispensation to the miracles connected with the birth of Jesus and his ministry (3:31-63, and C 56).

Allah's revelation being continuous, all people are invited to accept its completion in Islam, and controversies are deprecated. The Muslims are asked to hold together in union and harmony, and are promised security from harm from their enemies, and enjoined to seek friendship among their own people (3:64-120, and C. 57).

The battle of Badr showed how Allah helps and upholds the virtuous, and how patience, perseverance, and discipline find their reward; on the other hand, the lessons of Uhud must be learnt, not in despair, but in the exercise of the higher; virtues and in contempt of pain and death (3:121-148, and C. 58).

The misfortunes at Uhud are shown to be due to the indiscipline of some, the indecision and selfishness of others, and cowardice on the part of the hypocrites, but no enemy can hurt Allah's Cause (3:149-180, and C. 59).

The taunts of the enemy should be disregarded, and sincere prayer offered on Allah Who would grant His servants success and prosperity (3:181-200, and C. 60).

C.54 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:1-20)

The Quran revelation has, step by step,
Confirmed the Law of Moses and the Gospel
Of Jesus. It is a guide from Allah,
And appeals to reason and understanding.
Let us understand it rightly, in reverence
And truth, unswayed by those who reject
Faith, and seeking ever the reward
Of the pleasure of Allah, through firmness,
Patience, discipline, and charity, ad offering others
The light which we have ourselves received.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم (١)

1. A.L.M.

C342. See n. 25 to 2:1.

اللَّهُ لا إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ (٢)

2. Allah! there is no Allah but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.

C343. Cf. 2:255.

نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقاً لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ...

3. It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it;

... وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَاةَ وَالإِنجِيلَ (٣)

and He sent down Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus).

C344. In some editions the break between verses 3 and 4 occurs here in the middle of the sentence, but in the edition of Hafiz Uthman, followed by the Egyptian Concordance Fath-ur-Rahman, the break occurs at the word Furqan.

In verse-divisions our classicists have mainly followed rhythm. As the word Furqan from this point of view is parallel to the word Intiqam, which ends the next verse. I have accepted the verse-division at Furqan as more in consonance with Quranic rhythm. It makes no real difference to the numbering of the verses, as there is only a question of whether one line should go into verse 3 or verse 4. (R).

مِن قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَنزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ...

4. Before this, as a guide to mankind,

and He sent down the Criterion (of judgment between right and wrong).

C345. Criterion: Furqan: for meaning see 2:53 n. 68.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ...

Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty,

...وَاللّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ (٤)

and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution.

إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَخْفَى عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الأَرْضِ وَلاَ فِي السَّمَاء (٥)

5. From Allah, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاء...

6. He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases.

C346. Who can penetrate the mystery of life when a new life is just being born, except Allah?

The reference to the mystery of birth prepares us for the mystery of the birth of Jesus mentioned in 3:41 and the following verses.

...لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٦)

There is no god but He, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

هُوَ الَّذِيَ أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُّحْكَمَاتٌ...

7. He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: in it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning);

...هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ...

they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical.

C347. This passage gives us an important clue to the interpretation of the Holy Quran. Broadly speaking it may be divided into two portions, not given separately, but intermingled: viz.

1. the nucleus or foundation of the Book, literally "the mother of the Book".
2. the part which is not entirely clear.

It is very fascinating to take up the latter, and exercise our ingenuity about its meaning, but it refers to such profound matters that are beyond human language and though people of wisdom may get some light from it, no one should be dogmatic, as the final meaning is known to Allah alone.

The Commentators usually understand the verses "of established meaning" (muhkam) to refer to the categorical orders of the Shariah (or the Law), which are plain to everyone's understanding. But perhaps the meaning is wider:

- the "mother of the Book" must include the very foundation on which all Law rests, the essence of Allah's Message, as distinguished from the various illustrative parables, allegories, and ordinances. (R).

...فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ ...

But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part there of that is allegorical,

...مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاء الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاء تَأْوِيلِهِ ...

seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings,

...وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلاَّ اللّهُ ...

but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah

...وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ...

and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say:

C348. *One reading, rejected by the majority of Commentators, but accepted by Mujahid and others, would not make a break at the point here marked Waq Lazim,* but would run the two sentences together.

In that case the construction would run:

"No one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firm in knowledge. They say", etc.

... آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّنَا...

"We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord;"

...وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلاَّ أُوْلُواْ الأَلْبَابِ (٧)

and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.

...رَبَّنَا لاَ تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً

8. "Our Lord!" (they say),

"Let not our hearts deviate now after Thou hast guided us, but grant us mercy from Thine own Presence;

إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٨)...

for Thou art the Grantor of bounties without measure."

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لاَّ رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

9. "Our Lord!
Thou art He that will gather mankind together against a day about which there is no doubt:

إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (٩)...

for Allah never fails in His promise."

C349. This is the prayer of those who are firmly grounded in knowledge. The more they know the more they realise how little they know.

But they have Faith. The glimpses they get of Truth they wish to hold fast in their hearts, and they pray to Allah to preserve them from deviating even from what light they have got.

They are sure of their eventual return to Allah, when all doubts will be solved.

Section 2

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلاَ أَوْلاَدُهُم مِّنَ اللّهِ شَيْئًا...

10. Those who reject faith, neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah:

وَأُولَـئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ (١٠)...

they are themselves but fuel for the fire.

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ...

11. (Their plight will be) no better than that of the people of Pharaoh, and their predecessors:

C350. From the beginning of the world, sin, oppression, arrogance, and want of Faith have gone together.

The Pharaoh of the time of Moses relied upon his power, his territory, his armies, and his resources to mock at

Moses the messenger of Allah and to oppress the people of Moses. Allah saved the Israelite and punished their oppressors through many plagues and calamities. (R).

...كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ...

they denied Our Signs, and Allah called them to account for their sins.

وَاللّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (١١)

For Allah is strict in punishment.

قُل لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ ...

12. Say to those who reject Faith:

... سَتُغْلَبُونَ وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (١٢)

"Soon will ye be vanquished and gathered together to hell, an evil bed indeed (to lie on)!

C351. As Moses warned the Egyptians, so the warning is here sounded to the Pagan Arabs, the Jews and the Christians, and all who resisted Faith that their resistance would be in vain.

Already the battle of Badr (referred to in the next verse) had been a warning how Faith must conquer with the help of Allah. The next few decades saw the Byzantine and the Persian Empires overthrown because of their arrogance and their resistance to the Law of Allah.

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا...

13. "There has already been for you a Sign in the two armies that met (in combat):

C352. This refers to the battle of Badr in Ramadhan in the second year of the Hijrah.

The little exiled community of Makkan Muslims, with their friends in Madinah had organized themselves into a God-fearing community, but were constantly in danger of being attacked by their Pagan enemies of Makkah in

alliance with some of the disaffected elements (Jews and Hypocrites) in or near Madinah itself.

The design of the Makkans was to gather all the resources they could, and with an overwhelming force, to crush and annihilate Muhammad and his party. To this end Abu Sufyan was leading a richly-laden caravan from Syria to Makkah. He called for armed aid from Makkah,

The battle was fought in the plain of Badr, about 150 kilometers south-west of Madinah. The Muslim force consisted of only about 313 men, mostly ill-armed, but they were led by Muhammad, and they were fighting for their Faith.

The Makkan army well-armed and well-equipped, numbered over a thousand and had among its leaders some of the most experienced warriors of Arabia, including Abu Jahl, the inveterate foe and persecutor of Islam.

Against all odds the Muslims won a brilliant victory, and many of the enemy leaders, including Abu Jahl, were killed. (R).

...فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَأُخْرَى كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُم مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَأْيَ الْعَيْنِ ...

one was fighting in the Cause of Allah, the other resisting Allah; these saw with their own eyes twice their number.

C353. It was impossible, without the miraculous aid of Allah, for such a small and ill-equipped force as was the Muslim band, to defeat the large and well-found force of the enemy. But their Faith firmness, zeal, and discipline won them divine aid.

Enemy prisoners stated that the enemy ranks saw the Muslim force to be many times larger than it was.

...وَاللّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهِ مَن يَشَاء...

But Allah doth support with His aid whom He pleaseth.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُوْلِي الأَبْصَارِ(١٣)...

In this is a warning for such as have eyes to see."

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاء وَالْبَنِينَ...

14. Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons;

C354. The pleasures of this world are first enumerated:

- women for love;
- sons for strength and pride;
- hoarded riches, which procure all luxuries;
- the best and finest pedigree horses;
- cattle, the measure of wealth in the ancient world, as well as the means and symbols of good farming in the modern world; and
- broad acres of well-tilled land.

By analogy, we may include, for our mechanized age, machines of all kinds -tractors, motor-cars, aeroplanes, the best internal-combustion engines, etc.

...وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ ...

heaped-up hoards of gold and silver;

In "heaped-up hoards of gold and silver," the Arabic word translated hoards is **qaintir** plural of qintar, which literally means a Talent of 1.200 ounces of gold. (R).

...وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ...

horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land.

...ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

Such are the possessions of this world's life;

...وَاللّهُ عِندَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ (١٤)

but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (to return to).

قُلْ أُؤُنَبِّئُكُم بِخَيْرٍ مِّن ذَلِكُمْ ...

15. Say: shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those?

...لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

For the righteous are gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home;

...وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ...

with companions pure (and holy), and the good pleasure of Allah.

C355. Cf. 2:25 and n. 44.

...وَاللّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ(١٥)

For in Allah's sight are (all) His servants.

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٦)

16. (Namely), those who say:

"Our Lord! we have indeed believed: forgive us, then, our sins, and save us from the agony of the fire."

الصَّابِرِينَ ...

17. Those who show patience, firmness and self-control;

C356. Sabr **(Sabirin)** includes many shades of meaning: I have specified three here, viz., patience, firmness, and self-control.

See 2:45 and 2:153 and notes 61 and 157.

... وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالأَسْحَارِ (١٧)

who are true (in word and deed);

who worship devoutly;

who spend (in the way of Allah);

and who pray for forgiveness in the early hours of the morning.

C357. True servants of Allah are described in 3:16 and 17. They have faith, humility, and hope (3:16); and they have certain virtues (3:17) viz.

1. patience, steadfastness, self-restraint, and all that goes under the full definition of Sabr;

   this shows a certain attitude of mind:

2. in all their dealings they are true and sincere as they are also in their promises and words;

   this marks them out in social conduct:

3. further, their spiritual worship is earnest and deep, an inner counterpart of their outward conduct;

4. their worship of Allah shows itself in their love of their fellow-men, for they are ready and liberal in charity: and

5. their self-discipline is so great that the first thing they do every morning is humbly to approach their God.

شَهِدَ اللّهُ أَنَّهُ لاَ إِلـَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَالمَلاَئِكَةُ وَأُوْلُواْ العِلْمِ قَآئِمَاً بِالْقِسْطِ...

18. There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice.

C358. Allah Himself speaks to us through His revelations (through angels) and through His Creation, for all Nature glorifies Allah.

No thinking mind, if it only judges the matter fairly, can fail to find the same witness in his own heart and conscience.

All this points to the Unity of Allah, His exalted nature, and His wisdom.

...لاَ إِلـَهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٨)

There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللّهِ الإِسْلاَمُ ...

19. The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His will):

...وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوْتُواْ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ...

nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them.

C359. Baghyan:

- through envy,
- through selfish contumacy or obstinacy,
- through sheer contrary-mindedness, or desire to resist or rebel.

Cf. 2:90, and 2:213.

...وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ فَإِنَّ اللّهِ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (١٩)

But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account.

فَإِنْ حَآجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ..

20. So if they dispute with thee, say:

"I have submitted my whole self to Allah and so have those who follow me." .

C360. Wajh: whole self. See n. 114 to 2:112.

...وَقُل لِّلَّذِينَ أُوْتُواْ الْكِتَابَ وَالأُمِّيِّينَ أَأَسْلَمْتُمْ ...

And say to the People of the Book and to those who are unlearned: "Do ye (also) submit yourselves?"

C361. The People of the Book may be supposed to know something about the previous religious history of mankind. To them the appeal should be easy and intelligible, as all Religion is one, and it is only being renewed in Islam.

But the appeal is also made to the Pagan Arabs, who are unlearned, and who can well be expected to follow the example of one of their own, who received divine enlightenment, and was able to bring new knowledge to them.

A great many of both these classes did so. But the few who resisted Allah's grace, and actually threatened and persecuted those who believed, are told that Allah will look after His own.

...فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُواْ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَواْ وَّإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلاَغُ ...

If they do, they are in right guidance, but if they turn back, thy duty is to convey the Message;

...وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (٢٠)

and in Allah's sight are (all) His servants.

C362. Note the literary skill in the argument as it proceeds.

The mystery of birth faintly suggests that we are coming to the story of Jesus.

The exposition of the Book suggests that Islam is the same religion as that of the People of the Book.

Next we are told that the People of the Book made their religion one-sided, and through the priesthood of the family of Imran, we are brought to the story of Jesus, who was rejected by a body of the Jews as Muhammad was rejected by a body of both Jews and Christians.

C.55 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:21-30)

If the people who received
Earlier revelations confine themselves
To partial truths, and in their pride
Shut their eyes to the whole of the Book
Of Allah, their day is done
Let the Muslims seek the society
And friendship of their own, and trust
In Allah, who knows all, and holds
Every soul responsible for its own deeds.

Section 3

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ...

21. As to those who deny the Signs of Allah, and in defiance of right, slay the Prophets,

C363. Right; haqq has many shades of meaning;

1. right, in the sense of having a right to something;
2. right, in the sense of straight conduct, as opposed to wrong;
3. truth;
4. justice.

All these shades are implied here.

...وَيَقْتُلُونَ الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢١)

and slay those who teach just dealing with mankind, announce to them a grievous penalty.

C364. Examples of the Prophets slain were:

- "the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar": Matt. 23:35.

  Cf. 2:61. n. 75.

- Again, John the Baptist (Yahya, noble, chaste, a prophet, of the goodly company of the righteous. 3:39), was bound, imprisoned, and beheaded, and his head presented to a dancing harlot: Matt. 14:1-11.

...أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ

22. They are those whose works will bear no fruit in this world and in the Hereafter,

C365. Cf. 2:217.

...وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٢٢)

nor will they have anyone to help.

...أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ

23. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who have been given a portion of the Book?

C366. A portion of the Book: I conceive that Allah's revelation as a whole throughout the ages is "The Book".

The Law of Moses, and the Gospel of Jesus were portions of the Book. The Quran completes the revelation and is par excellence the Book of Allah.

...يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى كِتَابِ اللّهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ (٢٣)

They are invited to the Book of Allah, to settle their dispute, but a party of them turn back and decline (the arbitration).

C367. The Commentators mention a particular incident when a dispute was submitted by the Jews for arbitration to the Holy Prophet. He appealed to the authority of their own books, but they tried to conceal and prevaricate.

The general lesson is that the People of the Book should have been the first to welcome in Muhammad the living exponent of the Message of Allah as a whole, and some of them did so: but others turned away from guilty arrogance, relying on corrupted texts and doctrines forged out of their own fancies, though they were not conformable to reason and good sense.

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُواْ لَن تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلاَّ أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ...

24. This because they say: "The fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days;"

C368. Cf. 2:80.

...وَغَرَّهُمْ فِي دِينِهِم مَّا كَانُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ (٢٤)

for their forgeries deceive them as to their own religion.

...فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جَمَعْنَاهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لاَّ رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

25. But how (will they fare) when We gather them together against a day about which there is no doubt,

...وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُونَ (٢٥)

and each soul will be paid out just what it has earned, without (favor or injustice)?

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ...

26. Say: "O Allah! Lord of Power (and Rule),

...تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَن تَشَاء وَتَنزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّن تَشَاء...

thou givest Power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off power from whom Thou pleasest,

...وَتُعِزُّ مَن تَشَاء وَتُذِلُّ مَن تَشَاء...

thou enduest with honor whom thou pleasest, and thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest;

...بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ...

in Thy hand is all Good.

C369. Another glorious passage, full of meaning. The governing phrase in it all is: "In Thy hand is all Good."

What is the standard by which we may judge Good?

It is Allah's Will. Therefore when we submit to Allah's Will, and real Islam illuminates us, we see the highest Good.

There has been and is much controversy as to what is the Highest Good.

To the Muslim there is no difficulty: it is the Will of Allah. He must ever strive to learn and understand that Will. But once in that fortress, he is secure. He is not troubled with the nature of Evil.

... إِنَّكَ عَلَىَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٦)

Verily, over all things thou hast power.

...تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ

27. "Thou causest the Night to gain on the Day, and Thou causest the Day to gain on the Night;

C370. True in many senses.

In every twenty-four hours, night merges into day, and day into night, and there is no clear boundary between them.

In every solar year, the night gains on the day after the summer solstice, and the day gains on the night after the winter solstice.

But further, if light and darkness are viewed as symbols of;

a. knowledge and ignorance,

b. happiness and misery,

c. spiritual insight and spiritual blindness,

Allah's Plan or Will works here too as in the physical world, and in His hand is all Good.

...وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيَّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ...

Thou bringest the Living out of the Dead, and thou bringest the Dead out of the Living;

C371. We can interpret Dead and Living in even more senses than Day and Night: death physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual.

Life and Death may also apply to collective, group, or national life. And who has ever solved the mystery of Life? But Faith refers it to Allah's Will and Plan.

...وَتَرْزُقُ مَن تَشَاء بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٢٧)

and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure."

C372. Again true in all the senses suggested in the two previous notes. The only Eternal Reality is Allah. All else has its basis and sustenance in Him. Lest our little minds create fear out of "nicely calculated less or more", we are told at once that Allah's bounty is without measure or account.

...لاَّ يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاء مِن دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

28. Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers;

...وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ أَن تَتَّقُواْ مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً ...

if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah; except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them.

C373. If Faith is a fundamental matter in our lives our associations and friendships will naturally be with those who share our Faith.

"Evil communications corrupt good manners": and evil company may corrupt Faith.

In our ordinary every-day affairs of business, we are asked to seek the help of Believers rather than Unbelievers. Only in this way can our community be strong in organisation and unity. But where there is no question of preference, or where in self-defence we have to take the assistance of those not belonging to our Faith, that is permissible.

In any case we must not weaken our Brotherhood: we must try to make it stronger if possible.

...وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللّهِ الْمَصِيرُ (٢٨)

But Allah cautions you (to remember) Himself, for the final goal is to Allah.

...قُلْ إِن تُخْفُواْ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْدُوهُ يَعْلَمْهُ اللّهُ

29. Say:

"Whether ye hide what is in your hearts or reveal it, Allah knows it all.

...وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

He knows what is in the heavens, and what is on earth.

...وَاللّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٩)

And Allah has power over all things."

...يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا

30. "On the day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done,

...وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِن سُوٓءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا...

and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil.

...وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (٣٠)

But Allah cautions you (to remember) Himself.

And Allah is full of kindness to those that serve Him."

C.56 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:31-63)

Allah's truth is continuous, and His Prophets
From Adam, through Noah and Abraham,
Down to the last of the Prophets, Muhammad,
From one brotherhood. Of the progeny
Of 'Imran, father of Moses and Aaron,
Sprang a woman, who devoted
Her unborn offspring to Allah.
The child was Mary the mother of Jesus,
Her cousin was the wife of the priest
Zakariya, who took charge of Mary.
To Zakariya, in his old age, was born
A son Yahya, amid prodigies;
Yahya was the herald of Jesus
The son of Mary, and was known
As John the Baptist. Jesus was of virgin birth,
And performed many miracles.
But those to whom he came as Prophet
Rejected him, and plotted for his death.
Their plots failed, for Allah's Plan
Is above man's plots. So will it be
With Islam, the Truth from all eternity.

Section 4

قُلْ إِن كُنتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ...

31. Say:

"If ye do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you, and forgive you your sins,

...وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣١)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

قُلْ أَطِيعُواْ اللّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ...

32. Say: "Obey Allah and His Messenger;"

...فإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ (٣٢)

but if they turn back, Allah loveth not those who reject Faith.

إِنَّ اللّهَ اصْطَفَى آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٣)

33. Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all people.

ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِن بَعْضٍ ...

34. Offspring, one of the other;

C374. The Prophets in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim dispensation form one family literally. But the argument is wider. All men of God form spiritually one family. If you love and obey Allah, love and obey His Messenger; your love, obedience and discipline will be the test of your Faith.

... وَاللّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٣٤)

and Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ عِمْرَانَ ...

35. Behold! a woman of Imran said:

C375. Now we begin the story of Jesus.

As a prelude we have the birth of Mary and the parallel story of John the Baptist, Yahya the son of Zakariya.

Yahya's mother Elisabeth was a cousin of Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36), and therefore John and Jesus were cousins by blood, and there was a spiritual cousinhood in their birth and career.

Elisabeth was of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5), of a priestly family which went back to Aaron the brother of Moses and son of Imran. Her husband Zakariya was actually a priest, and her cousin Mary was presumably also of a priestly family.

By tradition Mary's mother was called Hannah (in Latin, Anna, and in English, Anne), and her father was called Imran. Hannah is therefore both a descendant of the priestly house of Imran and the wife of Imran,-"a woman of Imran" in a double sense,

... رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي...

"O my Lord!

I do dedicate unto thee what is in my womb for Thy special service, so accept this of me,

C376. Muharrar: freed from all worldly affairs and specially dedicated to Allah's service.

She expected a son, who was to be a special devotee, a miraculous son of the old age of his parents, but Allah gave her instead a daughter. But that daughter was Mary the mother of Jesus, the chosen one among the women: 3:42.

...إِنَّكَ أَنتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٣٥)

for Thou hearest and knowest all things."

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنثَى ...

36. When she was delivered, she said: "O my Lord! behold! I am delivered of a female child!"

...وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعَتْ ...

And Allah knew best what she brought forth --

C377. The mother of Mary expected a male child. Was she disappointed that it was a female child?

No, for she had Faith, and she knew that Allah's Plan was better than any wishes of hers.

Mary was no ordinary girl: only Allah knew what it was that her mother brought forth.

... وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالأُنثَى...

"And nowise is the male like the female.

C378. The female child could not be devoted to Temple service under the Mosaic law, as she intended. But she was marked out for a special destiny as a miracle-child, to be the mother of the miracle-child Jesus.

She was content to seek Allah's protection for her against all evil. There is a certain sense of pride in the girl on the part of the mother.

...وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (٣٦)

I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the Evil One, the Rejected."

...فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا

37. Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty; to the care of Zakariya was she assigned.

...كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِندَهَا رِزْقًا...

Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance.

...قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكِ هَـذَا...

He said: "O Mary! whence (comes) this to you?"

...قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ...

She said: "From Allah:

...إِنَّ اللّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاء بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٧)

for Allah provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure."

C379. Mary grew under Allah's special protection. Her sustenance, under which we may include both her physical needs and her spiritual food, came from Allah, and her growth was indeed a "goodly growth" which I have tried to express in the Text by the words "purity and beauty".

Some apocryphal Christian writings say that she was brought up in the Temple to the age of twelve like a dove, and that she was fed by angels.

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ ...

38. There did Zakariya pray to his Lord,

...قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِن لَّدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ...

saying: "O my Lord! grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure;

...إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ (٣٨)

for Thou art He that heareth prayer!"

C380. The birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus, of John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, and of Jesus, the prophet of Israel, whom Israel rejected, occurred in that order chronologically, and are told in that order.

They are all inter-connected. Zakariya prayed for no ordinary son. He and his wife were past the age of parenthood. Seeing the growth of Mary, he prayed for some child from Allah,- "from Thee, a progeny that is pure".

To his surprise, he is given a son in the flesh, ushered in by a special Sign. (R)

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلآئِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ ...

39. While he was standing in prayer in the chamber, the angels called unto him:

... أَنَّ اللّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَى...

"Allah doth give thee glad tidings of Yahya,

...مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّهِ ...

witnessing the truth of a Word from Allah,

C381. Notice: "a Word from Allah", not "the Word of Allah", the epithet that mystical Christianity uses for Jesus.

As stated in 3:59 below, Jesus was created by a miracle, by Allah's word "Be", and he was.

... وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٣٩)

and (be besides) noble, chaste, and a Prophet, of the (goodly) company of the righteous."

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلاَمٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ...

40. He said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son, seeing I am very old, and my wife is barren?"

...قَالَ كَذَلِكَ ...

"Thus," was the answer,

... اللّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاء (٤٠)

"doth Allah accomplish what He willeth."

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَل لِّيَ آيَةً...

41. He said: "O my Lord! give me a sign!"

...قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلاَّ تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلاَثَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلاَّ رَمْزًا...

"Thy Sign," was the answer, "shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three days but with signals.

...وَاذْكُر رَّبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالإِبْكَارِ (٤١)

Then celebrate the praises of thy Lord again and again, and glorify Him in the evening and in the morning."

Section 5

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ...

42. Behold! the angels said:

"O Mary! Allah hath chosen thee and purified thee;

...وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٢)

chosen thee above the women of all nations.

C382. Mary the mother of Jesus was unique, in that she gave birth to a son by a special miracle, without the intervention of the customary physical means. This of course does not mean that she was more than human, any more than that her son was more than human. She had as much need to pray to Allah as anyone else.

The Christian dogma, in all sects except the Unitarian, holds that Jesus was God and the son of God.

The worship of Mary became the practice in the Roman Catholic Church, which calls Mary the Mother of God. This seems to have been endorsed by the Council of Ephesus in 431, in the century before Muhammad was born to sweep way the corruptions of the Church of Christ.

For **'alamin** as meaning all nations, see 3:96, n. 423.

يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ (٤٣)

43. "O Mary! worship thy Lord devoutly; prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down."

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ ...

44. This is part of the tidings of the things unseen, which We reveal unto thee (O Prophet!) by inspiration;

C383. Things unseen: belong to a realm beyond the reach of human perception and therefore it would be unseemly to dispute or speculate about them. (R)

...وَمَا كُنتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُونَ أَقْلاَمَهُمْ ...

thou wast not with them when they cast lots with arrows,

C384. Literally, reeds: **aqalam**.

For the Arab custom of casting lots with arrows, see 2:219, n. 241.

... أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ ...

as to which of them should be charged with the care of Mary;

...وَمَا كُنتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٤٤)

nor wast thou with them when they disputed (the point).

C385. Christian apocryphal writings mention the contention between the priests as to the honor of taking charge of Mary, and how it was decided by means of rods or reeds in favour of Zakariya.

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلآئِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ...

45. Behold! the angels said

"O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him:

...اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ...

his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary,

C386. Christ: Greek, Christos=anointed: kings and priests were anointed to symbolize consecration to their office.

The Hebrew and Arabic form is Masih.

... وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (٤٥)

held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah.

C387. Nearest to Allah: Muqarrabin. Cf. 56:11.

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلاً ...

46. "He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity,

C388. The ministry of Jesus lasted only about three years, from 30 to 33 years of his age, when in the eyes of his enemies he was crucified.

But the Gospel of Luke (2:46) describes him as disputing with the doctors in the Temple at the age of 12, and even earlier, as a child, he was "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40).

Some apocryphal Gospels describe him as preaching from infancy.

... وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٤٦)

and he shall be (of the company) of the righteous."

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ...

47. She said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?"

C389. She was addressed by angels, who gave her Allah's message.

In reply she speaks as to Allah. In reply, apparently an angel gives Allah's message.

...قَالَ كَذَلِكِ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ...

He said: "Even so: Allah createth what He willeth;

...إِذَا قَضَى أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ (٤٧)

when He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it 'Be',

and it is!

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَاةَ وَالإِنجِيلَ (٤٨)

48. "And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel.

وَرَسُولاً إِلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

49. "And (appoint him) a Messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message):

... أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُم بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ...

I have come to you, with a sign from your Lord,

...أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُم مِّنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave;

C390. This miracle of the clay birds is found in some of the apocryphal Gospels; those of curing the blind and the lepers and raising the dead are in the canonical Gospels.

The original Gospel (see 3:48) was not the various stories written afterwards by disciples, but the real Message taught direct by Jesus.

...وَأُبْرِىءُ الأكْمَهَ والأبْرَصَ وَأُحْيـي الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ...

and I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah's leave;

...وَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ ...

and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses.

C391. This clause refers generally to a prophetic knowledge of what is not known to other people.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٤٩)

Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe.

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ وَلِأُحِلَّ لَكُم بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ..

50. "(I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me, and to make lawful to you part of what was (before) forbidden to you;

...وَجِئْتُكُم بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (٥٠)

I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah, and obey me.

إِنَّ اللّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَـذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٥١)

51. "It is Allah who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him.

This is a way that is straight."

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَى مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنصَارِي إِلَى اللّهِ ...

52. When Jesus found unbelief on their part he said:

"Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?"

...قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنصَارُ اللّهِ...

Said the Disciples: "We are Allah's helpers,

...آمَنَّا بِاللّهِ وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (٥٢)

we believe in Allah, and do thou bear witness that we are Muslims.

C392. The story of Jesus is told with special application to the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Note the word helpers (Ansar) in this connection, and the reference to plotters in 3:54.

It was the one Religion-the Religion of Allah, which was in essence the religion of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

The argument runs: who do ye then now make divisions and reject the living Teacher?

Islam is: bowing to the Will of Allah. All who have faith should bow to the Will of Allah and be Muslims.

رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا بِمَا أَنزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٥٣)

53. "Our Lord! we believe in what thou hast revealed, and we follow the Messenger; then write us down among those who bear witness."

وَمَكَرُواْ وَمَكَرَ اللّهُ...

54. And (then unbelievers) plotted and planned, and Allah too planned,

C393. The Arabic *Makara* has both a bad and a good meaning, that of making an intricate plan to carry out some secret purpose. The enemies of Allah are constantly doing that.

But Allah -in whose hands is all good- has His plans also, against which the evil ones will have no chance whatever.

...وَاللّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ (٥٤)

and the best of planners is Allah.

Section 6

إِذْ قَالَ اللّهُ يَا عِيسَى إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ ...

55. Behold! Allah said:

"O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself

C394. Read this with 4:157, where it is said that "whereas they slew him not nor they crucified him but it was made dubious unto them.

The guilt of the Jews remained, but Jesus was eventually taken up to Allah.

... وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ...

and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme;

C395. Jesus was charged by the Jews with blasphemy as claiming to be Allah or the son of Allah.

The Christians (except a few early sects which were annihilated by persecution, and the modern sect of Unitarians), adopted the substance of the claim, and made it the cornerstone of their faith.

Allah clears Jesus of such a charge or claim.

...وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject Faith, to the Day of Resurrection;

C396. Those who follow thee refers to both Muslims (insofar as they truly follow the basic teachings of Jesus) and Christians (who claim to follow him). [Eds].

...ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٥٥)

then shall ye all return unto Me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute.

C397. All the controversies about dogma and faith will disappear when we appear before Allah.

He will judge not by what we profess but by what we are.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَأُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ...

56. "As to those who reject faith, I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the Hereafter,

...وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٥٦)

nor will they have anyone to help.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ...

57. "As to those who believe and work righteousness, Allah will pay them (in full) their reward;

...وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥٧)

but Allah loveth not those who do wrong.

ذَلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ (٥٨)

58. "This is what We rehearse unto thee of the Signs and the Message of Wisdom."

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَى عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ ...

59. This similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam:

C398. After a description of the high position which Jesus occupies as a prophet, we have a repudiation of the dogma that he was Allah, or the son of Allah, or anything more than a man.

If it is said that he was born without a human father, Adam was also so born. Indeed Adam was born without either a human father or mother. As far as our physical bodies are concerned they are mere dust.

In Allah's sight Jesus was as dust just as Adam was or humanity is. The greatness of Jesus arose from the divine command "Be": for after that he was-more than dust - a great Prophet and teacher.

...خَلَقَهُ مِن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ (٥٩)

He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be", and he was.

الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (٦٠)

60. The truth (comes) from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt.

C399. The truth does not necessarily come from priests, or from the superstitions of whole peoples. It comes from Allah, and where there is a direct revelation, there is no room for doubt.

فَمَنْ حَآجَّكَ فِيهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ...

61. If anyone disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee,

...فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْاْ نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءنَا وَأَبْنَاءكُمْ وَنِسَاءنَا وَنِسَاءكُمْ وَأَنفُسَنَا وأَنفُسَكُمْ ...

say:

"Come! let us gather together, our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves:

...ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَل لَّعْنَةُ اللّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ (٦١)

then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!"

C400. In the year of Deputations, 10th of the Hijrah, came a Christian embassy from Najran (towards Yemen, about 150 miles north of Sanaa). They were much impressed on hearing this passage of the Quran explaining the true position of Christ, and they entered into tributary relations with the new Muslim State. But ingrained habits and customs prevented them from accepting Islam as a body.

The Holy Prophet, firm in his faith, proposed a *Mubahalah*, i.e., a solemn meeting, in which both sides should summon not only their men, but their women and children, earnestly pray to Allah, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who should lie. Those who had a pure and sincere faith would not hesitate.

The Christians declined, and they were dismissed in a spirit of tolerance with a promise of protection from the State in return for tribute.

إِنَّ هَـذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ ...

62. This is the true account:

C401. We are now in a position of deal with the questions which we left over at 2:87. Jesus is no more than a man.

It is against reason and revelation to call him Allah or the son of Allah. He is called the son of Mary to emphasize this. He had no human father, as his birth

was miraculous. But it is not this which raise him to his high position as a prophet, but because Allah called him to his office.

The praise is due to Allah, Who by His word gave him spiritual strength-"strengthened him with the Holy spirit. The miracles which surround his story relate not only to the "Clear Signs" which he brought.

It was those who misunderstood him who obscured his clear Signs and surrounded him with mysteries of their own invention. (R).

... وَمَا مِنْ إِلَـهٍ إِلاَّ اللّهُ...

there is no god except Allah;

...وَإِنَّ اللّهَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٦٢)

and Allah -- He is indeed the Exalted in Power, the Wise.

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ (٦٣)

63. But if they turn back, Allah hath full knowledge of those who do mischief.

C.57 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:64-120)

Islam doth invite all people

To the Truth; there is no cause

For dissembling or disputing

False are the people who corrupt

Allah's truth, or hinder men

From coming to Allah. Let the Muslims

Hold together in unity and discipline,

Knowing that they have a mission

Of righteousness for humanity

No harm can come to them.

Though there are good men and true
In other Faiths, Muslims must
Be true to their own Brotherhood.
They should seek help and friendship
From their own, and stand firm
In constancy and patient perseverance.

Section 7

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْاْ إِلَى كَلَمَةٍ سَوَاء بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ...

64. Say:

"O People of the Book!

come to common terms as between us and you:

...أَلاَّ نَعْبُدَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ وَلاَ نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضاً أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ...

that we worship none but Allah;

that we associate no partners with Him;

that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah."

C402. In the abstract the People of the Book would agree to all three propositions. In practice they fail.

Apart from doctrinal lapses from the unity of the One True God, there is the question of a consecrated Priesthood (among the Jews it was hereditary also), as if a mere human being-Cohen, or Pope, or Priest, or Brahman, could claim superiority apart from his learning and the purity of his life, or could stand between man and Allah in some special sense.

The same remarks apply to the worship of saints. They may be pure and sincere, but no one can protect us or claim Lordship over us except Allah.

For **Rabb**, see note 20 to 1:2.

Abraham was a true Prophet of Allah, but he could not be called a Jew or a Christian as he lived long before the Law of Moses or the Gospel of Jesus was revealed.

...فَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَقُولُواْ اشْهَدُواْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (٦٤)

If then they turn back, say:

"Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's will)."

... يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَآجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ

65. Ye People of the Book! why dispute ye about Abraham,

...وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّورَاةُ وَالإِنجِيلُ إِلاَّ مِن بَعْدِهِ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٥)

when the Law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him?

Have ye no understanding?

... هَاأَنتُمْ هَؤُلاء حَاجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ

66. Ah! ye are those who fell to disputing (even) in matters of which ye had some knowledge!

C403. The number of sects among the Jews and Christians shows that they wrangled and disputed even about some of the matters of their own religion, of which they should have had some knowledge. But when they talk of Father Abraham, they are entirely out of court, as he lived before their peculiar systems were evolved.

... فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّونَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge?

...وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٦٦)

It is Allah Who knows, and ye who know not!

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلاَ نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا ...

67. Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian, but he was true in faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam),

...وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٦٧)

and he joined not gods with Allah.

C404. Cf. 2:135 and the whole argument in that passage.

إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَـذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ...

68. Without doubt, among men the nearest of kin to Abraham are those who follow him, as are also this Prophet and those who believe;

...وَاللّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٨)

and Allah is the Protector of those who have faith.

وَدَّت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّونَكُمْ ...

69. It is the wish of a section of the People of the Book to lead you astray.

...وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلاَّ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٦٩)

But they shall lead astray (not you), but themselves and they do not perceive!

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ (٧٠)

70. Ye People of the Book!

why reject ye the Signs of Allah, of which ye are (yourselves) witnesses?

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٧١)

71. Ye People of the Book!

why do ye clothe truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth, while ye have knowledge?

C405. There are many ways of preventing the access of people to the truth. One is to temper with it, or trick it out in colours of falsehood: half-truths are often more dangerous than obvious falsehoods. Another is to conceal it altogether.

Those who are jealous of a prophet of Allah, whom they actually see before them, do not allow his credentials or virtues to be known, or vilify him, or conceal facts which would attract people to him.

When people do this of set purpose, against their own light ("of which ye are yourselves witnesses"), they are descending to the lowest depths of degradation, and they are doing more harm to themselves than to anyone else. (R).

Section 8

وَقَالَت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ...

72. A section of the People of the Book say:

...آمِنُواْ بِالَّذِيَ أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ وَاكْفُرُواْ آخِرَهُ ...

"Believe in the morning what is revealed to the believers, but reject it at the end of the day;

C406. Wajh here has the sense of "beginning", early part.

The cynics who plotted against Islam actually asked their accomplices to join the believers and then repudiate them.

...لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٧٢)

perchance they may (themselves) turn back.

وَلاَ تُؤْمِنُواْ إِلاَّ لِمَن تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ ...

73. "And believe no one unless he follows your religion."

...قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَى هُدَى اللّهِ أَن يُؤْتَى أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيتُمْ ...

Say:

"True guidance is the guidance of Allah; (fear ye) lest a revelation be sent to someone (else) like unto that which was sent unto you.

C407. The two clauses following have been variously construed, and some translations leave the sense ambiguous.

I have construed the conjunction **"an"** to mean "lest", as it undoubtedly does in 7:172. 'an taqulu", etc.

... أَوْ يُحَآجُّوكُمْ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ...

Or that those (receiving such revelation) should engage you in argument before your Lord."

C408. Cf. 2:76.

The People of the Book were doubly annoyed at the Muslims:

- that they should (being outside their ranks) receive Allah's revelations, and
- that having received such revelations, they should be able to convict them out of their own scriptures before their Lord!

... قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاء...

Say: "All bounties are in the hand of Allah: He granteth them to whom He pleaseth;

...وَاللّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٧٣)

and Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things."

يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاء وَاللّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٤)

74. For His Mercy He specially chooseth whom He pleaseth:
for Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded.

وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِن تَأْمَنْهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ...

75. Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back;

C409. Hoard of gold: qintar: a talent of 1,200 ounces of gold. See 3:14. n. 354. (R).

...وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ إِن تَأْمَنْهُ بِدِينَارٍ لاَّ يُؤَدِّهِ إِلَيْكَ إِلاَّ مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَآئِمًا...

others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless thou constantly stoodest demanding,

C410. Silver coin: dinar. In the later Roman Empire, the denarius was a small silver coin. It must have been current in Syria and the markets of Arabia in the time of the Prophet.

It was the coin whose name is translated in the English Bible by the word penny. Matt. 22:19: hence the abbreviation of penny is d (= denarius).

The later Arabian coin dinar coined by the Umayyad, was a gold coin after the pattern of the Byzantine (Roman) denarius aureus and weighed about 66349 grains troy.

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الأُمِّيِّينَ سَبِيلٌ...

because, they say, "There is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (pagans)."

C411. Every race imbued with race arrogance resorts to this kind of moral or religious subterfuge. Even if its members are usually honest or just among themselves, they are contemptuous of those outside their circle, and cheat and deceive them without any qualms of conscience.

This is a "lie against Allah."

...وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٥)

But they tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it.

بَلَى مَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَى فَإِنَّ اللّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٧٦)

76. Nay. Those that keep their plighted faith and act aright, verily Allah loves those who act aright.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً

77. As for those who sell the faith they owe to Allah and their own plighted word for a small price,

C412. All our duties to our fellow creatures are referred to the service and faith we owe to Allah. But in the matter of truth an appeal is made to our self-respect as responsible beings: is it becoming that we should be false to our own word, to ourselves?

And then we are reminded that the utmost we can gain by falsifying Allah's word or being untrue to ourselves is but a miserable price. We get at best something very paltry as the price for selling our very souls.

... أُوْلَـئِكَ لاَ خَلاَقَ لَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ...

they shall have no portion in the hereafter:

...وَلاَ يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّهُ وَلاَ يَنظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلاَ يُزَكِّيهِمْ ...

nor will Allah (deign to) speak to them or look at them on the Day of Judgment, nor will He cleanse them (of sin);

C413. Even on sinners -ordinary sinners- Allah will look with compassion and mercy: He will speak words of kindness and cleanse them of their sins.

But those who are in active rebellion against Allah and sin against their own light, -what mercy can they expect?

...وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٧٧)

they shall have a grievous penalty.

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلْوُونَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ...

78. There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues; (as they read) you would think it is a part of the Book, but it is no part of the Book;

...وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ...

and they say, "That is from Allah,"

but it is not from Allah:

...وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٨)

it is they who tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it!

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُؤْتِيَهُ اللّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ...

79. It is not (possible) that a man, to whom is given the Book, and Wisdom, and the prophetic office,

...ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُواْ عِبَادًا لِّي مِن دُونِ اللّهِ ...

should say to people: "Be ye my worshippers rather than Allah's;

C414. It is not in reason or in the nature of things that Allah's messenger should preach against Allah.

Jesus came to preach and convey the true message of Allah. (R).

...وَلَـٰكِن كُونُوا رَبَّانِيِّينَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ (٧٩)

on the contrary (he would say): "Be ye worshippers of Him Who is truly the Cherisher of all, for ye have taught the Book and ye have studied it earnestly."

...وَلَا يَأْمُرَكُمْ أَن تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا

80. Nor would he instruct you to take angels and prophets for Lords and Patrons.

C415. Jesus was a prophet, and the Holy Spirit "with which he was strengthened" was the Angel who brought the revelations to him.

...أَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (٨٠)

What! would he bid you to unbelief after ye have bowed your will (to Allah in Islam)?

Section 9

...وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ

81. Behold! Allah took the Covenant of the Prophets, saying:

C416. Cf. 2:63. n. 78.

The argument is:

You (People of the Book) are bound by your own oaths, sworn solemnly in the presence of your own Prophets. In the Old Testament as it now exists, Muhammad is foretold in Deut. 18:18: and the rise of the Arab nation in Isaiah. 42:11. for Kedar was a son of Ismail and the name is used for the Arab nation: in the New Testament as it now exists.

Muhammad is foretold in the Gospel of St. John. 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7:

the future Comforter cannot be the Holy Spirit as understood by Christians, because the Holy Spirit already was present, helping and guiding Jesus.

The Greek word translated "Comforter" is "Paracletos", which is an easy corruption from "Periclytos", which is almost a literal translation of "Muhammad" or "Ahmad": see 61:6.

Further, there were other Gospels that have perished, but of which traces still remain, which were even more specific in their reference to Muhammad; e.g., the Gospel of St. Barnabas, of which an Italian translation is extant in the State Library at Vienna. It was edited in 1907 with an English translation by Mr. Lonsdale and Laura Ragg.

.... لَمَا آتَيْتُكُم مِّن كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ...

"I give you a Book and Wisdom;

...ثُمَّ جَاءكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنصُرُنَّهُ...

then comes to you a Messenger confirming what is with you; do ye believe him and render him help."

...قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَى ذَلِكُمْ إِصْرِي...

Allah said: "Do ye agree, and take this My Covenant as binding on you?"

...قَالُواْ أَقْرَرْنَا...

They said: "We agree."

...قَالَ فَاشْهَدُواْ وَأَنَاْ مَعَكُم مِّنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٨١)

He said: "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses."

فَمَن تَوَلَّى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٨٢)

82. If any turn back after this, they are perverted transgressors.

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللّهِ يَبْغُونَ...

83. Do they seek for other than the Religion of Allah?

...وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا ...

While all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed to His Will (accepted Islam),

C417. Allah's Truth is manifest, and all that is good and true and sane and normal accepts it with joy.

But even where there is "disease in the heart" (2:10), or judgment is obscured by perversity, every creature must eventually see and acknowledge Allah and His power (2:167).

Cf. R. Bridges: "Testament of Beauty": iv. 1419-22:-

> "For God's love is unescapable as nature's environment, which if a man ignore or think to thrust it off, he is the ill-natured fool that runneth blindly on death."

All Nature adores Allah, and Islam asks for nothing peculiar or sectarian; it but asks that we follow our nature and make our will conformable to Allah's Will as seen in Nature, history, and revelation.

Its message is universal.

... وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ (٨٣)

and to Him shall they all be brought back.

قُلْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا...

84. Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us

...وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأَسْبَاطِ ...

and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes,

...وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

and in (Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord;

...لاَ نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (٨٤)

we make no distinction between one and another among them,

and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam)."

وَمَن يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الإِسْلاَمِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ...

85. If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him;

C418. The Muslim position is clear.

The Muslim does not claim to have a religion peculiar to himself. Islam is not a sect or an ethnic religion. In its view all Religion is one, for the Truth is one. It was the religion preached by all the earlier Prophets. It was the truth taught by all the inspired Books.

In essence it amounts to a consciousness of the Will and Plan of Allah and a joyful submission to that Will and Plan.

If any one wants a religion other than that, he is false to his own nature, as he is false to Allah's Will and Plan. Such a one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance.

...وَهُوَ فِي الآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٨٥)

and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُواْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُواْ أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ وَجَاءهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ...

86. How shall Allah guide those who reject faith after they accepted it and bore witness that the Messenger was true and that clear signs had come unto them?

...وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٨٩)

But Allah guides not a people unjust.

أُوْلَـئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ أَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللّهِ وَالْمَلآئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٧)

87. Of such the reward is that on them (rests) the curse of Allah, of His angels, and of all mankind.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (٨٨)

88. In that will they dwell; nor will their penalty be lightened, nor respite be their (lot).

C418a. Cf. 2:161-162.

إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ تَابُواْ مِن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُواْ فَإِنَّ اللهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٨٩)

89. Except for those that repent (even) after that, and make amends: for verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُواْ كُفْرًا لَّن تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ ...

90. But those who reject faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of faith, never will their repentance be accepted;

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الضَّآلُّونَ (٩٠)

for they are those who have (of set purpose) gone astray.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَمَاتُواْ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِم مِّلْءُ الأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوِ افْتَدَى بِهِ...

91. As to those who reject faith, and die rejecting, never would be accepted from any such as much gold as the earth contains, though they should offer it for ransom.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٩١)

For such is (in store) a penalty grievous, and they will find no helpers.

Section 10

لَن تَنَالُواْ الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنفِقُواْ مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ...

92. By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love;

C419. The test of charity is:

- do you give something that you value greatly, something that you love?
- If you give your life in a Cause, that is the greatest gift you can give.
- If you give yourself, that is, your personal efforts, your talents, your skill, your learning, that comes next in degree.

- If you give your earnings, your property, your possessions, that is also a great gift; for many people love them even more than other things.

And there are less tangible things, such as position, reputation, the well-being of those we love, the regard of those who can help us, etc. It is unselfishness that Allah demands, and there is no act of unselfishness, however small or intangible, but is well within the knowledge of Allah.

...وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِن شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ (٩٢)

and whatever ye give, of a truth Allah knoweth it well.

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِـلاًّ لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ...

93. All food was lawful to the children of Israel,

...إِلاَّ مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَائِيلُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَاةُ ...

except what Israel made unlawful for itself, before the Law (of Moses) was revealed.

C420. The Arabs ate the flesh of the camel, which is lawful in Islam, but it was prohibited by the Jewish Law of Moses (Leviticus 11:4).

But that Law was very strict because of the "hardness of heart" of Israel, because of Israel's insolence and iniquity (6:146). Before it was promulgated Israel was free to choose its own food.

I take "Israel" here to stand for the people of Israel.

...قُلْ فَأْتُواْ بِالتَّوْرَاةِ فَاتْلُوهَا إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٩٣)

Say: "Bring ye the Law and study it, if ye be men of truth."

فَمَنِ افْتَرَىَ عَلَى اللّهِ الْكَذِبَ مِن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٩٤)

94. If any, after this, invent a lie and attribute it to Allah, they are indeed unjust wrongdoers.

قُلْ صَدَقَ اللّهُ ...

95. Say: "Allah speaketh the truth:

... فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ...

follow the religion of Abraham, the sane in faith;

... وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٩٥)

he was not of the pagans."

C421. The greater freedom of Islam in the matter of the ceremonial law, compared with the Mosaic Law, is not a reproach but a recommendation.

We go back to an older source than Judaism,-the institutions of Abraham. By common consent his Faith was sound, and he was certainly not a Pagan, a term contemptuously applied to the Arabs by the Jews.

... إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ ...

96. The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka

C422. Bakka: same as Makkah, perhaps an older name.

The foundation of the Ka'bah goes back to Abraham, but there are place associations in the sacred territories with the names of Adam and Eve. (R).

... مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٩٦)

full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings:

C423. 'Alamin:

- all the worlds (1:2 and n.20),
- all kinds of beings;
- all nations (3:42):
- all creatures (3:97),

فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ...

97. In it are signs manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham;

C424. Station of Abraham: see 2:125 and n. 125.

... وَمَن دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا...

whoever enters it attains security;

C425. See reference in last note.

...وَلِلّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلاً ...

pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah, those who can afford the journey;

وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩٧)

but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of his creatures.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ...

98. Say: "O People of the Book! why reject ye the signs of Allah,

...وَاللّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَى مَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٨)

when Allah is Himself witness to all ye do?

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَأَنتُمْ شُهَدَاء...

99. Say: "O ye People of the Book!

why obstruct ye those who believe, from the path of Allah, seeking to make it crooked, while ye were yourselves witnesses (to Allah's Covenant)?

C426. Cf. 3:81.

...وَمَا اللّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٩)

But Allah is not unmindful of all that ye do."

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوَاْ ...

100. O ye who believe!

... إِن تُطِيعُواْ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْكِتَابَ يَرُدُّوكُم بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَافِرِينَ (١٠٠)

if ye listen to a faction among the People of the Book, they would (indeed) render you apostates after ye have believed!

وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنتُمْ تُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتُ اللّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُ...

101. And how would ye deny faith while unto you are rehearsed the Signs of Allah, and among you lives the Messenger?

...وَمَن يَعْتَصِم بِاللّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (١٠١)

Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a way that is straight.

Section 11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اتَّقُواْ اللّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ...

102. O ye who believe!

fear Allah as He should be feared,

C427. Fear is of many kinds:

1. the abject fear of the coward;
2. the fear of a child or an inexperienced person in the face of an unknown danger;
3. the fear of a reasonable man who wishes to avoid harm to himself or to people whom he wishes to protect;
4. the reverence which is akin to love, for it fears to do anything which is not pleasing to the object of love.

The first is unworthy of man; the second is necessary for one immature; the third is a manly precaution against evil as long as it is unconquered; and the fourth is the seed-bed of righteousness.

Those mature in faith cultivate the fourth: at earlier stages, the third or the second may be necessary; they are fear, but not the fear of Allah.

The first is a feeling of which anyone should be ashamed.

...وَلاَ تَمُوتُنَّ إِلاَّ وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (١٠٢)

and die not except in a state of Islam.

C428. Our whole being should be permeated with Islam: it is not a mere veneer or outward show.

...وَاعْتَصِمُواْ بِحَبْلِ اللّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلاَ تَفَرَّقُواْ

103. And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves;

C429. The simile is that of people struggling in deep water, to whom a benevolent Providence stretches out a strong and unbreakable rope of rescue.

If all hold fast to it together, their mutual support adds to the chance of their safety.

...وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ أَعْدَاء...

and remember with gratitude Allah's favor on you;

...فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُم بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا...

for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace, ye became brethren;

C430. Yathrib was torn with civil and tribal feuds and dissensions before the Messenger of Allah set his feet on its soil. After that, it became the City of the Prophet, Madinah, and unmatched Brotherhood, and the pivot of Islam.

This poor quarrelsome world is a larger Yathrib: can we establish the sacred feet on its soil, and make it a new and larger Madinah?

...وَكُنتُمْ عَلَىَ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا...

and ye were on the brink of the pit of fire, and He saved you from it.

...كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٠٣)

Thus doth Allah make his signs clear to you: that ye may be guided.

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ...

104. Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong;

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (١٠٤)

they are the ones to attain felicity.

C431. Muflih, aflaha, falah: the root idea is;

- attainment of desires;
- happiness, in this world and the next;
- success;

- prosperity;
- freedom from anxiety, care, or a disturbed state of mind;

the opposite of 'azab in the next verse, which includes:

- failure;
- misery;
- punishment or penalty;
- agony or anguish.

The ideal Muslim community is happy, untroubled by conflicts or doubts, sure of itself, strong, united, and prosperous: because it invites to all that is good; enjoins the right; and forbids the wrong, -a master- stroke of description in three clauses.

وَلاَ تَكُونُواْ كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُواْ وَاخْتَلَفُواْ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ...

105. Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs;

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٠٥)

for them is a dreadful penalty.

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ...

106. On the day when some faces will be (lit up with) white, and some faces will be (in the gloom of) black;

C432. The "face" (wajh) expresses our Personality, our inmost being.

White is the colour of Light; to become white is to be illumined with Light, which stands for felicity, the rays of the glorious light of Allah.

Black is the colour of darkness, sin, rebellion, misery; removal from the grace and light of Allah.

These are the Signs of heaven and hell. The standard of decision in all questions is the justice of Allah.

...فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكَفَرْتُم بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ...

to those whose faces will be black, (will be said): "Did ye reject faith after accepting it?

...فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (١٠٦)

Taste then the penalty for rejecting faith.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللّهِ ...

107. But those whose faces will be (lit with) white, they will be in (the light of) Allah's Mercy;

... هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (١٠٧)

therein to dwell (for ever).

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا اللّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٨)

108. These are the Signs of Allah: We rehearse them to thee in truth: and Allah means no injustice to any of His creatures.

وَلِلّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ ...

109. To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth;

... وَإِلَى اللّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (١٠٩)

to Him do all questions go back (for decision).

C433. Cf. 2:210.

Section 12

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ...

110. Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind,

...تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ...

enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.

C434. The logical conclusion to a Universal Religion is a non-sectarian, non-racial, non-doctrinal, religion, which

Islam claims to be. For Islam is just submission to the Will of Allah. This implies

1. Faith,
2. doing right, being an example to others to do right, and having the power to see that the right prevails,
3. eschewing wrong, being an example to others to eschew wrong, and having the power to see that wrong and injustice are defeated. Islam therefore lives, not for itself, but for mankind.

The People of the Book, if only they had faith, would be Muslims, for they have been prepared for Islam. Unfortunately there is Unfaith, but it can never harm those who carry the banner of Faith and Right, which must always be victorious.

...وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم...

If only the People of the Book had faith, it were best for them;

...مِّنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (١١٠)

among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors.

لَن يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلاَّ أَذًى ...

111. They will do you no harm, barring a trifling annoyance;

... وَإِن يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ يُوَلُّوكُمُ الأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لاَ يُنصَرُونَ (١١١)

if they come out to fight you, they will show you their backs, and no help shall they get.

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُواْ إِلاَّ بِحَبْلٍ مِّنْ اللّهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ...

112. Shame is pitched over them (like a tent) wherever they are found, except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men;

C435. Duribat: I think there is a simile from the pitching of a tent.

Ordinarily a man's tent is a place of tranquility and honour for him. The tent of the wicked wherever they are found is ignominy, shame, and humiliation. It is pity from Allah or from men that gives them protection when their pride has a fall.

Using the same simile of tent in another way, their home will be destitution and misery.

...وَبَآؤُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ...

they draw on themselves wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution.

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الأنبِيَاء بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ...

This because they rejected the signs of Allah, and slew the Prophets in defiance of right;

C436. Cf. 3:21, n. 363.

...ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَواْ وَّكَانُواْ يَعْتَدُونَ (١١٢)

this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds.

لَيْسُواْ سَوَاء مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ ...

113. Not all of them are alike:

of the People of the book are a portion that stand (for the right);

...يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللّهِ آنَاء اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ (١١٣)

they rehearse the signs of Allah all night long, and then prostrate themselves in adoration.

C437. In Islam we respect sincere faith and true righteousness in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah.

This verse, according to Commentators, refers to those People of the Book who eventually embraced Islam. (R).

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

114. They believe in Allah and the Last Day;

...وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ...

they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they (hasten in emulation) in (all) good works;

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٤)

they are in the ranks of the righteous.

وَمَا يَفْعَلُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَن يُكْفَرُوهُ وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ (١١٥)

115. Of the good that they do, nothing will be rejected of them;
for Allah knoweth well those that do right.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلاَ أَوْلاَدُهُم مِّنَ اللّهِ شَيْئًا...

116. Those who reject faith, neither their possessions nor their (numerous) progeny will avail them aught against Allah;

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (١١٦)

they will be companions of the fire,
dwelling therein (for ever).

C438. Cf. 3:10.

مَثَلُ مَا يُنفِقُونَ فِي هِـذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ...

117. What they spend in the life of this (material) world may be likened to a wind

...فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتْهُ ...

which brings a nipping frost: it strikes and destroys the harvest of men who have wronged their own souls;

...وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّهُ وَلَـكِنْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (١١٧)

it is not Allah that hath wronged them, but they wrong themselves.

C439. False "spending" may be either in false "charity" or in having a "good time". For the man who resists Allah's purpose, neither of them is any good.

The essence of charity is faith and love. Where these are wanting, charity is no charity. Some baser motive is there: ostentation, or even worse, getting a person into the giver's power by a pretence of charity, something that is connected with the life of this grasping, material world.

What happens? You expect a good harvest. But "while you think, good easy man, full surely your greatness is a-ripening," there comes a nipping frost, and destroys all your hopes.

The frost is some calamity, or the fact that you are found out! Or perhaps it is "High blown pride," as in Shakespeare's Henry VIII. ii. 3.

In your despair you may blame blind Fate or you may blame Allah! Blind Fate does not exist, for there is Allah's Providence, which is just and good.

The harm or injustice has come, not from Allah, but from your own soul. You wronged your soul, and it suffered the frost. Your base motive brought you no good: it may have reduced you to poverty, shame, and disgrace.

All the brave show of the wicked in this life is but a wind charged with evil to themselves.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ بِطَانَةً مِّن دُونِكُمْ لاَ يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالاً ...

118. O ye who believe!

take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks; they will not fail to corrupt you.

...وَدُّواْ مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَاء مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ ...

They only desire your ruin: rank hatred has already appeared from their mouths;

...وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ...

what their hearts conceal is far worse.

...قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الآيَاتِ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (١١٨)

We have made plain to you the Signs, if ye have wisdom.

هَاأَنتُمْ أُوْلاء تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلاَ يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّهِ...

119. Ah! ye are those who love them, but they love you not, though ye believe in the whole of the Book.

C440. Islam gives you the complete revelation, "the whole of the Book," though partial revelations have come in all ages.

Cf. 3:23, and n. 366.

...وَإِذَا لَقُوكُمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا ...

When they meet you, they say, "We believe;"

C441. Cf. 2:14.

... وَإِذَا خَلَوْا عَضُّوا عَلَيْكُمُ الأَنَامِلَ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ...

but when they are alone, they bite off the very tips of their fingers at you in their rage.

...قُلْ مُوتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ...

Say: "Perish in your rage;

...إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُور (١١٩)

Allah knoweth well all the secrets of the heart."

...إِن تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِن تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا

120. If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it.

...وَإِن تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لاَ يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا...

But if ye are constant and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you,

...إِنَّ اللّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (١٢٠)

for Allah compasseth round about all that they do.

C.58 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:121-148)

Allah's help comes to those who strive

With firmness, as it did at Badr,

Much can be learnt from the misfortunes

At Uhud. It is not for us
To question Allah's Plan, which is full
Of wisdom and mercy for all. Our duty
Is to stand firm and unswerving,
To obey, and in steadfast courage
To persevere, to retrieve our mistakes.
Not in grief and despair, but in firm hope
In Allah and in contempt of pain and death.

Section 13

وَإِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّىءُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَال...

121. Remember that morning thou didst leave the household (early) to post the faithful at their stations for battle:

C442. The battle of Uhud was a great testing time for the young Muslim community. Their mettle and the wisdom and strength of their Leader were shown in the battle of Badr (3:13 and note), in which the Makkan Pagans suffered a crushing defeat.

The Makkans were determined to wipe off their disgrace and to annihilate the Muslims in Madinah. To this end they collected a large force and marched to Madinah. They numbered some 3,000 fighting men under Abu Sufyan, and they were so confident of victory that their women-folk came with them, and showed the most shameful savagery after the battle.

To meet the threatened danger the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad Al- Mustafa, with his usual foresight, courage, and initiative, resolved to take his station at the foot of Mount Uhud, which dominates the city of Madinah some three miles to the north.

Early in the morning, on the 7th of Shawwal, A.H. 3 (January, 625), he made his dispositions for battle. Madinah winters are notoriously rigorous, but the warriors of Islam (700 to 1000 in number) were up

early. A torrent bed was to their south, and the passes in the hills at their back were filled with 50 archers to prevent the enemy attack from the rear. The enemy were set the task of attacking the walls of Madinah, with the Muslims at their rear. In the beginning the battle went well for the Muslims.

The enemy wavered, but the Muslim archers, in disobedience of their orders, left their posts to join in the pursuit and share in the booty. There was also treachery on the part of the 300 "Hypocrites" led by Abdullah ibn Ubai, who deserted.

The enemy took advantage of the opening left by the archers, and there was severe hand-to-hand fighting, in which numbers told in favour of the enemy. Many of the Companions and Helpers were killed. But there was no rout.

Among the Muslim martyrs was the gallant Hamza, a brother of the Prophet's father. The graves of the martyrs are still shown at Uhud.

The Messenger himself was wounded in his head and face, and one of his front teeth was broken. Had it not been for his firmness, courage, and coolness, all would have been lost. As it was, the prophet, in spite of his wound, and many of the wounded Muslims, inspired by his example, returned to the field next day, and Abu Sufyan and his Makkan army thought it most prudent to withdraw.

Madinah was saved, but a lesson in faith, constancy, firmness, and steadfastness was learnt by the Muslims. (R).

...وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٢١)

and Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

...إِذْ هَمَّت طَّآئِفَتَانِ مِنكُمْ أَن تَفْشَلاَ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا

122. Remember two of your parties meditated cowardice; but Allah was their Protector,

C443. The two parties wavering in their minds were probably the Banu Salma Khazraji and the Banu Haritha, but they rallied under the Prophet's inspiration.

That incident shows that man may be weak, but if he allows his weak will to be governed by the example of men of God, he may yet retrieve his weakness.

... وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١٢٢)

and in Allah should the faithful (ever) put their trust.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ ...

123. Allah had helped you at Badr, when ye were a contemptible little force;

...فَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢٣)

then fear Allah; thus may ye show your gratitude.

C444. Gratitude to Allah is not to be measured by words. It should show itself in conduct and life.

If all the Muslims had learnt the true lesson from the victory at Badr, their archers would not have left the posts appointed for them, nor the two tribes mentioned in the last note ever wavered in their faith.

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَن يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَن يُمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِثَلاَثَةِ آلاَفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلآئِكَةِ مُنزَلِينَ (١٢٤)

124. Remember thou saidst to the faithful: is it not enough for you that Allah should help you with three thousand angels (specially) sent down?

C445. Read verse 124 with the following five verses, to get its full signification.

بَلَى إِن تَصْبِرُواْ وَتَتَّقُواْ وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ هَـذَا...

125. "Yea -- if ye remain firm, and act aright, even if the enemy should rush here on you in hot haste,

...يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِخَمْسَةِ آلافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلآئِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ (١٢٥)

your Lord would help you with five thousand angels making a terrific onslaught."

C446. Musawwim: this is the active voice of the verb, not to be confused with the passive voice in 3:14, which has a different signification.

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّهُ إِلاَّ بُشْرَى لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُكُم بِهِ...

126. Allah made it but a message of hope for you; and an assurance to your hearts:

...وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلاَّ مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١٢٦)

(in any case) there is no help except from Allah the Exalted, the Wise.

C447. Whatever happens, whether there is a miracle or not, all help proceeds from Allah. Man should not be so arrogant as to suppose that his own resources will change the current of the world plan.

Allah helps those who show constancy, courage, and discipline, and use all the human means at their disposal, not those who fold their hands and have no faith. But Allah's help is determined on considerations exalted far above our petty human motive, and by perfect wisdoms, of which we can have only faint glimpses.

لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ أَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ ...

127. That he might cut off a fringe of the unbelievers or expose them to infamy,

C448. A fringe of the Unbelievers: an extremity, an end, either upper or lower.

Here it may mean that the chiefs of the Makkan Pagans, who had come to exterminate the Muslims with such confidence, went back frustrated in their purpose.

The shameless cruelty with which they and their women mutilated the Muslim corpses on the battle-field will stand recorded to their eternal infamy.

Perhaps it also exposed their real nature to some of those who fought for them. e.g., Khalid ibn Al-Walid, who not only accepted Islam afterwards, but became one of the most notable champions of Islam. He was with the

Muslims in the conquest of Makkah and later on, won distinguished honours in Syria and 'Iraq.

... فَيَنقَلِبُواْ خَآئِبِينَ (١٢٧)

and they should then be turned back, frustrated of their purpose.

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ ...

128. Not for thee, (but for Allah), is the decision: whether He turn in mercy to them, or punish them;

... فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١٢٨)

for they are indeed wrongdoers.

C449. Uhud is as much a sign-post for Islam as Badr. For us in these latter days it carries an ever greater lesson. Allah's help will come if we have faith, obedience, discipline, unity, and the spirit of acting in righteousness and justice. If we fail, His mercy is always open to us. But it is also open to our enemies, and those who seem to us His enemies.

His Plan may be to bring sinners to repentance, and to teach us righteousness and wisdom through those who seem in our eyes to be rebellious or even defiant. There may be good in them that He sees and we do not,-a humbling thought that must lead to our own self-examination and self-improvement.

وَلِلّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

129. To Allah belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth.

...يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاء وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢٩)

He pleaseth and punisheth whom He pleaseth:

but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 14

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَأْكُلُواْ الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُّضَاعَفَةً ...

130. O ye who believe! devour not usury, doubled and multiplied;

C450. Cf. 2:275 and notes.

The last verse spoke of forgiveness, even to enemies. If such mercy is granted by Allah to erring sinners, how much more is it incumbent on us, poor sinners to refrain from oppressing our fellow-being in need, in matters of mere material and ephemeral wealth?

Usury is the opposite extreme of charity, unselfishness, striving, and giving of ourselves in the service of Allah and of our fellow-men.

...وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (١٣٠)

but fear Allah; that ye may (really) prosper.

C451. Real prosperity consists, not in greed, but in giving,

- the giving of ourselves and of our substance in the cause of Allah and Allah's truth and in the service of Allah's creatures.

وَاتَّقُواْ النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ (١٣١)

131. Fear the fire, which is prepared for those who reject faith.

وَأَطِيعُواْ اللّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (١٣٢)

132. And obey Allah and the Messenger; that ye may obtain mercy.

وَسَارِعُواْ إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

133. Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord,

... وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (١٣٣)

and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous.

C452. The Fire (3:131) is, as always, contrasted with the Garden, -in other words, Hell contrasted with Heaven, we are told that its width alone is that of the

whole of the heavens and the earth,- all the creation we can imagine.

In other words our spiritual felicity covers not merely this or that part of our being, but all life and existence. Who can measure its width, or length, or depth? (R).

الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاء وَالضَّرَّاء وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاس...

134. Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;

C453. Another definition of the righteous (verses 134-35). So far from grasping material wealth, they give freely, of themselves and their substance, not only when they are well-off and it is easy for them to do so, but also when they are in difficulties, for other people may be in difficulties at the same time.

They do not get ruffled in adversity, or get angry when other people behave badly, or their own good plans fail. On the contrary they redouble their efforts. For the charity or good deeds all the more necessary in adversity. And they do not throw the blame on others. Even where such blame is due and correction is necessary, their own mind is free from a sense of grievance, for they forgive and cover other men's faults.

This as far as other people are concerned. But we may be ourselves at fault, and perhaps we brought some calamity on ourselves. The righteous man is not necessarily perfect. In such circumstances his behaviour is described in the next verse.

...وَاللّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٣٤)

for Allah loves those who do good.

... وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُواْ فَاحِشَةً

135. And those who, having done something to be ashamed of,

C454. The righteous man, when he finds he has fallen into sin or error, does not whine or despair, but asks for Allah's forgiveness, and his faith gives him hope. If he is sincere, that means that he abandons his wrong conduct and makes amends.

... أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ...

or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins,

C455. Sin is a sort of oppression of ourselves by ourselves. This follows from the doctrine of personal responsibility, as opposed to that of blind fate or of an angry God or gods lying in wait for revenge or injury on mankind.

...وَمَن يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ ...

and who can forgive sins except Allah?

...وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣٥)

And are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done.

أُوْلَـئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

136. For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord,

...وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

and gardens with rivers flowing underneath, an eternal dwelling;

...وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (١٣٦)

how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ ...

137. Many were the Ways of Life that have passed away before you:

C456. Cf. Tennyson (In Memoriam):

"Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be: They are but broken lights of Thee, And Thou, 0 Lord! art more than they."

Only Allah's Truth will last, and it will gain the mastery in the end. If there is defeat, we must not be dejected, lose heart, or give up the struggle. Faith means hope, activity, striving steadfastly on to the goal.

... فَسِيرُوا فِي الأَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٣٧)

travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected truth.

هَـٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (١٣٨)

138. Here is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah!

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٩)

139. So lose not heart, nor fall into despair:

for ye must gain mastery if ye are true in faith.

إِن يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ...

140. If a wound hath touched you, be sure a similar wound hath touched the others.

C457. These general considerations apply in particular to the disaster at Uhud.

1. In a fight for truth, if you are hurt, be sure the adversary has suffered hurt also, the more so as he has no faith to sustain him.
2. Success or failure in this world comes to all at varying times: we must not grumble, as we do not see the whole of Allah's Plan.
3. Men's true mettle is known in adversity as gold is assayed in fire;

   Cf. also 3:154, n. 467.
4. Martyrdom is in itself an honour and a privilege:

   how glorious is the fame of Hamza the Martyr?
5. If there is any dross in us, it will be purified by resistance and struggle.
6. When evil is given rope a little, it works out its own destruction;

   the orgies of cruelty indulged in by the Pagans after what they supposed to be their victory at Uhud filled up their cup of iniquity; it lost them the support and adherence of the best in their own ranks, and hastened the destruction of Paganism from Arabia.

   Cf. 3:127 and n. 448.

...وَتِلْكَ الأيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns:

that Allah may know those that believe,

... وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنكُمْ شُهَدَاء...

and that He may take to Himself from your ranks martyr-witnesses (to Truth).

...وَاللّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٤٠)

And Allah loveth not those that do wrong.

وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَيَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٤١)

141. Allah's object also is to purge those that are true in faith and to deprive of blessing those that resist faith.

C458. The **purge** or purification was in two senses.

1. It cleared out the Hypocrites from the ranks of the Muslim warriors.
2. The testing-time strengthened the faith of the weak and wavering: for suffering has its own mission in life.

The Prophet's example -wounded but staunch, and firmer than ever- put new life into the Community.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تَدْخُلُواْ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُواْ مِنكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٤٢)

142. Did ye think that ye would enter heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought hard (in His cause) and remained steadfast?

C459. Cf. 2:214.

وَلَقَدْ كُنتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَلْقَوْهُ ...

143. Ye did indeed wish for death before ye met him:

...فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ (١٤٣)

now ye have seen him with your own eyes (and ye flinch!).

Section 15

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلاَّ رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ...

144. Muhammad is no more than a Messenger: many were the Messengers that passed away before him.

C460. This verse primarily applies to the battle of Uhud, in the course of which a cry was raised that the Messenger was slain. He had indeed been severely wounded, but Talha, Abu Bakr, and Ali were at his side, and his own unexampled bravery saved the Muslim army from a rout.

This verse was recalled again by Abu Bakr when the Messenger actually died a natural death eight years later, to remind people that Allah, Whose Message he brought, lives for ever. And have need to remember this now and often for two reasons:

1. when we feel inclined to pay more than human honour to one who was the truest, the purest, and the greatest of men, and thus in a sense to compound for our forgetting the spirit of his teaching, and
2. when we feel depressed at the chances and changes of time, and forget that Allah lives and watches over us and over all His creatures now as in a history in the past and in the future.

أَفَإِن مَّاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ ...

if he died or were slain, will ye then turn back on your heels?

...وَمَن يَنقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَن يَضُرَّ اللّهَ شَيْئًا...

If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah;

...وَسَيَجْزِي اللّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ (١٤٤)

but Allah (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve him) with gratitude.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ الله كِتَابًا مُّؤَجَّلاً...

145. Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave, the term being fixed as by writing.

...وَمَن يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَن يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا...

If any do desire a reward in this life, We shall give it to him; and if any do desire a reward in the hereafter, We shall give it to him.

C461. There is a slight touch of irony in this. As applied to the archers at Uhud, who deserted their post for the sake of plunder, they might have got some plunder, but they put themselves and the whole of their army into jeopardy. For a little worldly gain, they nearly lost their souls.

On the other hand, those who took the long view and fought with staunchness and discipline, their reward was swift and sure. If they died, they got the crown of martyrdom. If they lived, they were heroes honoured in this life and the next.

...وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ (١٤٥)

And swiftly shall We reward those that (serve Us with) gratitude.

...وَكَأَيِّن مِّن نَّبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رِبِّيُّونَ كَثِيرٌ

146. How many of the Prophets fought (in Allah's way), and with them (fought) large bands of godly men?

...فَمَا وَهَنُواْ لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُواْ وَمَا اسْتَكَانُواْ...

But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in.

...وَاللّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٤٦)

And Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast.

...وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلاَّ أَن قَالُواْ

147. All that they said was:

...رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا...

"Our Lord! forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgressed our duty;

...وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٤٧)

establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist faith."

فَآتَاهُمُ اللّهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابِ الآخِرَةِ...

148. And Allah gave them a reward in this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter.

...وَاللّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٤٨)

For Allah loveth those who do good.

C.59 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:149-180)

Uhud showed how dangerous it was
To lend ear to enemy suggestions,
To disobey orders, dispute, lose courage,
Or seek selfish ends; some even followed
The evil course of turning back.
But great is Allah's mercy; where He helps,
No harm can come. Trust your Leader.
The Hypocrites, in withdrawing from battle,
Were really helping the Unbelievers,
But glorious were those who knew
No fear; those killed in the Cause of Allah
Yet live and thrive and do rejoice;
And never can those who fight against Faith
Hurt in the least the Cause of Allah.

Section 16

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

149. O ye who believe!

... إِن تُطِيعُواْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنقَلِبُواْ خَاسِرِينَ (١٤٩)

if ye obey the unbelievers, they will drive you back on your heels, and ye will turn back (from faith) to your own loss.

بَلِ اللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النَّاصِرِينَ (١٥٠)

150. Nay, Allah is your Protector, and He is the best of helpers.

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا...

151. Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers, for that hey joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority:

...وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ (١٥١)

their abode will be the fire; and evil is the home of the wrongdoers!

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُم بِإِذْنِهِ...

152. Allah did indeed fulfil His promise to you when ye with His permission were about to annihilate your enemy,

...حَتَّى إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُم مَّا تُحِبُّونَ...

until ye flinched and fell to disputing about the order and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight (of the Booty) which ye covet.

C462. The order was: not to leave the post and strictly to maintain discipline. Uhud was in the beginning a victory for the Muslims. Many of the enemy were slain, and they were retiring when a part of the Muslims, against orders, ran in pursuit, attracted by the prospects of booty.

See note to 3:121.

...مِنكُم مَّن يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنكُم مَّن يُرِيدُ الآخِرَةَ ...

Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter.

...ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنكُمْ ...

Then did He divert you from your foes in order to test you, but He forgave you:

C463. The disobedience seemed at first pleasant: they were chasing the enemy, and there was the prospect of

booty. But when the gap was noticed by the enemy, they turned the flank round the hill and nearly overwhelmed the Muslims.

Had it not been for Allah's grace, and the firmness of their Prophet and his immediate Companions, they would have been finished.

...وَاللّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٥٢)

for Allah is full of grace to those who believe.

... إِذْ تُصْعِدُونَ وَلاَ تَلْوُونَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ فِي أُخْرَاكُمْ

153. Behold! ye were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at anyone, and the Messenger in your rear was calling you back.

...فَأَثَابَكُمْ غُمَّاً بِغَمٍّ لِّكَيْلاَ تَحْزَنُواْ عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلاَ مَا أَصَابَكُمْ ...

There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for (the booty) that had escaped you and for (the ill) that had befallen you.

C464. It would seem that a party of horsemen led by the dashing Khalid ibn Walid came through the gap in the passes where the Muslim archers should have been, and in the confusion that arose, the retreating foe rallied and turned back on the Muslims.

From the low ground on the bank of the valley the Muslims retreated in their turn and tried to gain the hill. They had a double loss:

1. they were baulked of the booty they had run after, and
2. their own lives and the lives of their whole army were in danger, and many lives were actually lost from their ranks.

Their own lives being in danger, they had hardly time to grieve for the general calamity. But it steadied them, and some of them stood the test.

...وَاللّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٥٣)

For Allah is well aware of all that ye do.

ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَى طَآئِفَةً مِّنكُمْ...

154. After (the excitement) of the distress, He sent down calm on a band of you overcome with slumber,

C465. After the first surprise, when the enemy turned on them, a great part of the Muslims did their best, and seeing their mettle, the enemy withdrew to his camp. There was a lull; the wounded had rest; those who had fought the hard fight were visited by kindly Sleep, sweet Nature's nurse. In contrast to them was the band of Hypocrites, whose behaviour is described in the next note.

...وَطَآئِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ...

while another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, moved by wrong suspicions of Allah, suspicions due to ignorance.

...يَقُولُونَ هَل لَّنَا مِنَ الأَمْرِ مِن شَيْءٍ...

They said: "What affair is this of ours?"

C466. The Hypocrites withdrew from the fighting. Apparently they had been among those who had been counseling the defence of Madinah within the walls instead of boldly coming out to meet the enemy.

Their distress was caused by their own mental state: the sleep of the just was denied them: and they continued to murmur of what might have been. Only fools do so: wise men face actualities.

...قُلْ إِنَّ الأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم مَّا لاَ يُبْدُونَ لَكَ...

Say thou: "Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah's."

They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee.

...يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا...

They say (to themselves): "If we had had anything to do with this affair, we should not have been in the slaughter here."

...قُل لَّوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ...

Say: "Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death;"

...وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ...

but (all this was) that Allah might test what is in your breasts and purge what is in your hearts:

C467. That testing by Allah is not in order that it may add to His knowledge, for He knows all. It is in order to help us subjectively, to mould our will, and purge us of any grosser motives, that will be searched out by calamity.

If it is a hardened sinner, the test brings conviction out of his own self

Cf. also 3:140.

...وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ(١٥٤)

for Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْاْ مِنكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُواْ...

155. Those of you who turned back on the day the two hosts met, it was Satan who caused them to fail, because of some (evil) they had done.

C468. It was the duty of all who were able to fight, to fight in the sacred cause at Uhud.

But a small section were timid; they were not quite as bad as those who railed against Allah, or those who thoughtlessly disobeyed orders. But they still failed in their duty.

It is our inner motives that Allah regards. These timorous people were forgiven by Allah. Perhaps they were given another chance: perhaps they rose to it and did their duty then.

...وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللّهُ عَنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (١٥٥)

But Allah has blotted out (their fault): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

Section 17

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

156. O ye who believe!

... لاَ تَكُونُواْ كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَقَالُواْ لإِخْوَانِهِمْ إِذَا ضَرَبُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ ...

be not like the unbelievers, who say of their brethren, when they are travelling through the earth or engaged in fighting:

... أَوْ كَانُواْ غُزًّى لَّوْ كَانُواْ عِندَنَا مَا مَاتُواْ وَمَا قُتِلُواْ...

"If they had stayed with us, they would not have died, or been slain.

...لِيَجْعَلَ اللّهُ ذَلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

This that Allah may make it a cause of sighs and regrets in their hearts.

...وَاللّهُ يُحْيِـي وَيُمِيتُ وَاللّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١٥٦)

It is Allah that gives life and death, and Allah sees well all that ye do.

C469. It is want of faith that makes people afraid

- of meeting death,
- of doing their duty when it involves danger, as in traveling in order to earn an honest living, or fighting in a sacred cause.

Such fear is part of the punishment for want of faith.

If you have faith, there is no fear in meeting death, for it brings you nearer to your goal, nor in meeting danger for a sufficient cause, because you know that the keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. Nothing can happen without Allah's Will.

If it is Allah's Will that you should die, your staying at home will not save you. If it is His Will that you should live, the danger you incur in a just cause brings you glory.

Supposing it is His Will that you should lose your life in the danger, there are three considerations that would make you eager to meet it:

1. dying in doing your duty is the best means of reaching Allah's Mercy;
2. the man of faith knows that he is not going to an unknown country of which he has no news; he is going nearer to Allah; and
3. he is being "brought together" unto Allah; i.e., he will meet all his dear ones in faith: instead of the separation which the souls without faith fear, he looks forward to a surer reunion than is possible in this life.

وَلَئِن قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (١٥٧)

157. And if ye are slain, or die, in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all they could amass.

C470. Notice a beautiful little literary touch here.

At first sight you would expect the second person here ("you could amass"), to match the second person in the earlier clause. But remember that the second person in earlier clause refers to the man of faith, and the third person in the last line refers to the Unbelievers; as if it said:

"Of course you as a man of faith would not be for hoarding riches: your wealth, -duty and the mercy of Allah,- is far more precious than anything the Unbelievers can amass in their selfish lives. "

وَلَئِن مُّتُّمْ أَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (١٥٨)

158. And if ye die, or are slain, Lo! it is unto Allah that ye are brought together.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ ...

159. It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them.

C471. The extremely gentle nature of Muhammad endeared him to all, and it is reckoned as one of the Mercies of Allah.

One of the Prophet's titles is "A Mercy to all Creation."

At no time was this gentleness, this mercy, this long-suffering with human weaknesses, more valuable than after a disaster like that at Uhud. It is a quality, which then, as always, bound and binds the souls of countless men to him.

...وَلَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ...

Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee;

...فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ...

so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them;

... وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الأَمْرِ...

and consult them in affairs (of moment).

...فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ (١٥٩)

Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah.

For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).

إِن يَنصُرْكُمُ اللّهُ فَلاَ غَالِبَ لَكُمْ...

160. If Allah helps you, none can overcome you:

...وَإِن يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَن ذَا الَّذِي يَنصُرُكُم مِّن بَعْدِهِ...

if He forsakes you, who is there, after that, that can help you?

...وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١٦٠)

In Allah, then, let believers put their trust.

... وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَن يَغُلَّ

161. No prophet could (ever) be false to his trust.

C472. Besides the gentleness of his nature, Al-Mustafa was known from his earliest life for his trustworthiness. Hence his title of Al-Amin. Unscrupulous people often read their own low motives into other men, and their accusation, which is meant to injure, fastens on the various virtues for which the man they attack is well known.

Some of the Hypocrites after Uhud raised some doubts about the division of the spoils, thinking to sow the seeds of poison in the hearts of the men who had deserted their posts in their craving for booty.

Those low suspicions were never believed in by any sensible people, and they have no interest for us now. But the general principles here declared are of eternal value.

1. Prophets of Allah do not act from unworthy motives.
2. Those who act from such motives are the lowest of creatures, and they will make no profit,
3. A prophet of Allah is not to be judged by the same standard as a greedy creature.
4. in Allah's eyes there are various grades of men, and we must try to understand and appreciate such grades.

   If we trust our Leader, we shall not question his honesty without cause. If he is dishonest, he is not fit to be a leader. (R).

... وَمَن يَغْلُلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

If any person is so false, He shall, on the Day of Judgment, restore what he misappropriated;

...ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُونَ (١٦١)

then shall every soul receive its due, whatever it earned, and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

أَفَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللّهِ كَمَن بَاء بِسَخْطٍ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ ...

162. Is the man who follows the good pleasure of Allah like the man who draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and whose abode is in Hell?

... وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٦٢)

A woeful refuge!

هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِندَ اللّهِ واللّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦٣)

163. They are in varying grades in the sight of Allah;
and Allah sees well all that they do.

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولاً مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ...

164. Allah did confer a great favor on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from among themselves,

C473. Cf. 2:151.

...يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ...

rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom,

...وَإِن كَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلاَلٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٦٤)

while, before that, they had been in manifest error.

أَوَلَمَّا أَصَابَتْكُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَدْ أَصَبْتُم مِّثْلَيْهَا قُلْتُمْ أَنَّى هَـذَا...

165. What! when a single disaster smites you, although ye smote (your enemies) with one twice as great, do ye say?
"Whence is this?"

...قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِندِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٦٥)

Say (to them): "It is from yourselves:
for Allah hath power over all things."

C474. If Uhud was a reverse to the Muslims, they had inflicted a reverse twice as great on the Makkans at Badr.

This reverse was not without Allah's permission, for He wanted to test and purify the faith of those who followed Islam, and to show them that they must strive and do all in their power to deserve Allah's help.

If they disobeyed orders and neglected discipline, they must attribute the disaster to themselves and not to Allah.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ فَبِإِذْنِ اللّهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٦٦)

166. What ye suffered on the day the two armies met, was with the leave of Allah, in order that He might test the believers.

C475. Test: literally know.

See n. 467 to 3:154.

وَلْيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُواْ...

167. And the Hypocrites also.

C476. The testing of the Hypocrites was the searching out of their motives and exposing them to the sight of their brethren, who might otherwise have been taken in.

In the first place they gave counsels of caution: in their minds it was nothing but cowardice.

In the second place, what they wished was not the good of the community but its being placed in a contemptible position. When others were for self-sacrifice, they were for ease and fair words. Pretending to be Muslims, they were nearer to Unbelief.

Ironically they pretended to know nothing of fighting, and left their devout brethren to defend their faith and ideas. If that devout spirit did not appeal to them, they might at least have defended their city of Madinah when it was threatened,-defended their hearths and homes as good citizens.

...وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْاْ قَاتِلُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ أَوِ ادْفَعُواْ...

These were told: "Come, fight in the way of Allah, or (at least) drive (the foe from your city)."

...قَالُواْ لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالاً لاَّتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ ...

They say: "Had we known how to fight, we should certainly have followed you."

...هُمْ لِلْكُفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلإِيمَانِ ...

They were that day nearer to unbelief than to faith,

...يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِم مَّا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ (١٦٧)

saying with their lips what was not in their hearts.

But Allah hath full knowledge of all they conceal.

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا...

168. (They are) the ones that say, (of their brethren slain), while they themselves sit (at ease):

"If only they had listened to us, they would not have been slain."

...قُلْ فَادْرَؤُوا عَنْ أَنفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٦٨)

Say: "Avert death from your own selves, if ye speak the truth."

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ...

169. Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead.

... بَلْ أَحْيَاء عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ (١٦٩)

Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.

C477. A beautiful passage about the Martyrs in the cause of Truth.

They are not dead: they live, -and in a far higher and deeper sense than in the life they have left.

Even those who have no faith in the Hereafter honour those that die in their cause, with the crown of immortality in the minds and memories of generations unborn.

But in Faith we see a higher, truer, and less relative immortality. Perhaps "immortality" is not the right word in this connection, as it implies a continuation of this life. In their case, through the gateway of death, they enter, the true real Life, as opposed to its shadow here.

فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ ...

170. They rejoice in the bounty provided by Allah:

...وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِم مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلاَّ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (١٧٠)

and with regard to those left behind, who have not yet joined them (in their bliss), the (martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve.

C478. The Martyrs not only rejoice at the bliss they have themselves attained. The dear ones left behind are in their thoughts: it is part of their glory that they have saved their dear ones from fear, sorrow, humiliation, and grief, in this life, even before they come to share in the glories of the Hereafter.

Note how the refrain: "on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve": comes in here with a new and appropriate meaning.

Besides other things, it means that the dear ones have no cause to grieve at the death of the Martyrs; rather have they cause to rejoice.

يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَفَضْلٍ ...

171. They glory in the Grace and the Bounty from Allah,

...وَأَنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٧١)

and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the faithful to be lost (in the least).

Section 18

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُواْ لِلّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِن بَعْدِ مَآ أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ...

172. Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after being wounded,

C479. After the confusion at Uhud, men rallied round the Prophet. He was wounded, and they were wounded, but they were all ready to fight again.

Abu Sufyan with his Makkans withdrew, but left a challenge with them to meet him and his army again at the fair of Badr Sughra next year. The challenge was accepted, and a picked band of Muslims under their

intrepid Leader kept the tryst, but the enemy did not come.

They returned, not only unharmed, but enriched by the trade at the fair, and (it may be presumed) strengthened by the accession of new adherents to their cause.

...لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُواْ مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَواْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٧٢)

those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward.

...الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُواْ لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَاناً

173. Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you": and frightened them: but it (only) increased their faith.

...وَقَالُواْ حَسْبُنَا اللّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ (١٧٣)

They said:

"For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs."

... فَانقَلَبُواْ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَفَضْلٍ

174. And they returned with Grace and Bounty from Allah:

... لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُواْ رِضْوَانَ اللّهِ

no harm ever touched them; for they followed the good pleasure of Allah:

...وَاللّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٧٤)

and Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded.

...إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءهُ فَلاَ تَخَافُوهُمْ

175. It is only the Evil One that suggests to you the fear of his votaries: be ye not afraid of them,

...وَخَافُونِ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٧٥)

but fear Me, if ye have faith.

...وَلاَ يَحْزُنكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَن يَضُرُّواْ اللّهَ شَيْئاً

176. Let not those grieve thee who rush headlong into unbelief: not the least harm will they do to Allah:

...يُرِيدُ اللّهُ أَلاَّ يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٧٦)

Allah's plan is that He will give them no portion in the Hereafter, but a severe punishment.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُاْ الْكُفْرَ بِالإِيمَانِ لَن يَضُرُّواْ اللّهَ شَيْئًا ...

177. Those who purchase unbelief at the price of faith, not the least harm will they do to Allah,

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٧٧)

but they will have a grievous punishment.

وَلاَ يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ...

178. Let not the Unbelievers think that our respite to them is good for themselves:

...إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُواْ إِثْمًا ...

We grant them respite that they may grow in their iniquity:

C480. That the cup of their iniquity may be full. The appetite for sin grows with what it feeds on. The natural result is that the sinner sinks deeper into sin.

If there is any freedom of will, this naturally follows, though Allah's Grace is always ready for the repentant. If the Grace is rejected, the increase of iniquity makes the nature of iniquity plainer to those who might otherwise be attracted by its glitter. The working of Allah's Law is therefore both just and merciful.

See also the next verse.

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (١٧٨)

but they will have a shameful punishment.

مَّا كَانَ اللّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى مَآ أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىَ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ...

179. Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which ye are now, until He separates what is evil from what is good.

C481. The testing of good men by calamities and evil men by leaving them in the enjoyment of good things is

part of the trials of Allah, in which some freedom of choice is left to man.

The psychological and subjective test is unfailing, and the separation is effected partly by the operation of the human wills, to which some freedom is allowed. But it must be effected, if only in the interests of the good.

...وَمَا كَانَ اللّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ ...

Nor will He disclose to you the secrets of the Unseen.

C482. Man in his weak state would be most miserable if he could see the secrets of the Future or the secrets of the Unseen. But things are revealed to him from time to time as may be expedient for him, by Messengers chosen for the purpose.

Our duty is to hold fast by faith and lead a good life.

... وَلَكِنَّ اللّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِن رُّسُلِهِ مَن يَشَاء...

But He chooses of His Messengers (for the purpose) whom He pleases.

...فَآمِنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ...

So believe in Allah and His Messengers:

...وَإِن تُؤْمِنُواْ وَتَتَّقُواْ فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٧٩)

and if ye believe and do right, ye have a reward without measure.

وَلاَ يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ ...

180. And let not those who covetously withhold of the gifts which Allah hath given them of His Grace,

C483. The gifts are of all kinds:

- material gifts, such as wealth, property, strength of limbs, etc., or
- intangible gifts, such as influence, birth in a given set, intellect, skill, insight, etc., or
- spiritual gifts of the highest kind.

The spending of all these things (apart from what is necessary for ourselves) for those who need them, is charity, and purifies our own character.

The withholding of them (apart from our needs) is similarly greed and selfishness, and is strongly condemned.

...هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ...

think that it is good for them:

... بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُواْ بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

nay, it will be the worse for them: soon shall the things which they covetously withheld be tied to their necks like a twisted collar, on the Day of Judgment.

C484. By an apt metaphor the miser is told that his wealth or the other gifts which he hoarded will cling round his neck and do him no good. He will wish he could get rid of them, but he will not be able to do so.

According to the Biblical phrase in another connection they will hang like a millstone round his neck (Matt. 18:6).

The metaphor here is fuller. He hugged his wealth or his gifts about him. They will become like a heavy collar, the badge of slavery, round his neck. They will be tied tight and twisted, and they will give him pain and anguish instead of pleasure.

Cf. also 17:13.

...وَلِلّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ ...

To Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth;

C485. Another metaphor is now introduced. Material wealth or property is only called ours during our short life here.

So all gifts are ours in trust only; they ultimately revert to Allah, to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens or on earth. (R).

... وَاللّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١٨٠)

and Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

C.60 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(3:181-200)

Regard, unmoved, the taunts of those
Who laugh at faith; nor let their falsehood
Nor their seeming prosperity, raise
Questions in your minds. All
Who can read the Signs of Allah in Nature
Know His wisdom, goodness, power
And justice. They know His promise
Is sure, and in humble prayer,
Wholly put their trust in Him.

Section 19

لَّقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ قَالُواْ إِنَّ اللّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاء...

181. Allah hath heard the taunt of those who say: "Truly, Allah is indigent and we are rich!"

C486. In 2:245 we read: "Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan?"

In other places charity or spending in the way of Allah is metaphorically described as giving to Allah. The Holy Prophet often used that expression in appealing for funds to be spent in the way of Allah. The scoffers mocked and said:

"So Allah is indigent and we are rich!"

This blasphemy was of a piece with all their conduct in history, in slaying the Prophets and men of God.

... سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُواْ وَقَتْلَهُمُ الأنبِيَاء بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ...

We shall certainly record their word and (their act) of slaying the Prophets in defiance of right,

C487. For the expression **"slaying in defiance of right,"** Cf. 3:21, and 3:112.

...وَنَقُولُ ذُوقُواْ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ (١٨١)

and We shall say: "Taste ye the penalty of the Scorching Fire!

... ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ

182. "This is because of the (unrighteous deeds) which your hands sent on before ye:

C488. Cf. 2:95 and note.

... وَأَنَّ اللّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلاَّمٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ (١٨٢)

for Allah never harms those who serve Him."

الَّذِينَ قَالُواْ إِنَّ اللّهَ عَهِدَ إِلَيْنَا أَلاَّ نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُولٍ حَتَّىَ يَأْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَأْكُلُهُ النَّارُ...

183. They (also) said: "Allah took our promise not to believe in a messenger unless He showed us a sacrifice consumed by fire (from heaven)."

C489. Burn sacrifices figured in the Mosaic Law, and in the religious ceremonies long before Moses, but it is not true that the Mosaic Law laid down a fire from heavens on a burnt sacrifice as a test of the credentials of Prophets.

Even if it had been so, did the Jews obey the Prophets who showed this Sign? In Leviticus 9:23-24, we are told a burnt offering prepared by Moses and Aaron: "and there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat." Yet the people rebelled frequently against Moses.

Abel's offering (sacrifice) was probably a burnt offering: it was accepted by Allah, and he was killed by Cain out of jealousy: Gen. 4:3-8.

Mosaic sacrifices were no longer-needed by the people of Jesus or the people of Muhammad.

...قُلْ قَدْ جَاءكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِي بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالَّذِي قُلْتُمْ...

Say: "There came to you Messengers before me, with clear signs and even with what ye ask for:

فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٨٣)...

why then did ye slay them, if ye speak the truth?"

فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ جَآؤُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ (١٨٤)

184. Then if they reject thee, so were rejected Messengers before thee, who came with clear Signs, Books of dark prophecies, and the Book of enlightenment.

C490. The three things mentioned in the Text are:

1. Clear Signs (baiyinat);
2. zubur, and
3. kitab-il-Munir.

The signification of 1, I have explained in the note to 3:62, as far as they relate to Jesus.

In a more general sense, it means the clear evidence which Allah's dealings furnish about a Messenger of Allah having a true mission: e.g., Moses in relation to Pharaoh.

As to 2, the word Zubur has been translated as scriptures. It comes from the root Zabara which implies something hard. The commentators are not agreed, but the prophetic writings which seemed to contemporaries difficult to understand may well be meant here.

David's psalms (Zabur, 4:163) may also come under this description.

As to 3, there is no doubt about the literal meaning of the words, "the Book of Enlightenment". But what does it precisely refer to?

I take it to mean the fundamental guide to conduct,-the clear rules laid down in all Dispensations to help men to lead good lives. (R).

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ...

185. Every soul shall have a taste of death:

C491. The soul will not die; but the death of the body will give a taste of death to the soul when the soul

separates from the body. The soul will then know that this life was but a probation. And seeming inequalities will be adjusted finally on the Day of Judgment.

... وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense.

فَمَن زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ...

Only he who is saved far from the fire and admitted to the garden will have attained the object (of life):

...وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلاَّ مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ (١٨٥)

for the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception.

C492. Cf. Longfellow's Psalm of Life:
"All this world's a fleeting show. For man's illusion given".
The only reality will be when we have attained our final goal.

لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ...

186. Ye shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves;

C493. Not wealth and possessions only (or want of them), are the means of our trial. All our personal talents, knowledge, opportunities, and their opposites, - in fact everything that happens to us and makes up our personality is a means of our testing.
So is our Faith: we shall have to put up for it many insults from those who do not share it.

... وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيرًا...

and ye shall certainly hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the Book before you and from those who worship many gods.

...وَإِن تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الأُمُورِ (١٨٦)

But if ye persevere patiently, and guard against evil, then that will be a determining factor in all affairs.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْكِتَابَ ...

187. And remember Allah took a Covenant from the People of the Book,

C494. Truth -Allah's Message- comes to any man or nation as a matter of sacred trust. It should be broadcast and published and taught and made clear to all within reach.

Privileged priesthood at once erects a barrier. But worse, -when such priesthood tampers with the truth, taking what suits it and ignoring the rest, it has sold Allah's gift for a miserable ephemeral profit; how miserable, it will learn when retributive justice comes.

... لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلاَ تَكْتُمُونَهُ...

o make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it;

...فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاء ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْاْ بِهِ ثَمَناً قَلِيلاً ...

but they threw it away behind their **backs**, and purchased with it some miserable gain!

C495. Cf. 2:101.

... فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ (١٨٧)

and vile was the bargain they made!

لاَ تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أَتَواْ وَّيُحِبُّونَ أَن يُحْمَدُواْ بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُواْ ...

188. Think not that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done,

C496. A searching picture of the worldly wise!

They may cause mischief and misery to others, but gloat over any glory it may bring them!

They may trample down Allah's truths, and enthrone false standards of worship.

They may take credit for virtues they do not possess and seeming successes that come in spite of their despicable deceptions.

...فَلاَ تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٨٨)

think not that they can escape the penalty.

For them is a penalty grievous indeed.

...وَلِلّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ

189. To Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth;

... وَاللّهُ عَلَىَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٨٩)

and Allah hath power over all things.

...إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلاَفِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ

190. Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day,

C497. See 2:164.

The two items mentioned here are just brief symbols recalling the six or seven mentioned in the other passage. And those too are but brief symbols and reminders of the glorious majesty of Allah and His goodness to man.

... لآيَاتٍ لِّأُوْلِي الأَلْبَابِ (١٩٠)

there are indeed Signs for men of understanding.

...الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىَ جُنُوبِهِمْ

191. Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides,

C498. That is, in all postures, which again is symbolical of all circumstances, personal, social, economic, historical and other.

...وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ

and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought):

...رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلاً

"Our Lord! not for naught hast thou created (all) this!

... سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ(١٩١)

Glory to thee! give us salvation from the penalty of the fire.

C499. It is the thought of Salvation that connects all these glories with man. Otherwise man would be a miserable, contemptible creature in these beauties and wonders of Nature. With his high destiny of Salvation he can be lifted even higher than these glories!

The Fire is a symbol of penalty. We pray for salvation from the penalty.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَن تُدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ ...

192. "Our Lord! any whom thou dost admit to the fire, truly thou coverest with shame,

... وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنصَارٍ (١٩٢)

and never will wrongdoers find any helpers!

رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا...

193. "Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (us) to faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord', and we have believed.

...رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الأَبْرَارِ(١٩٣)

Our Lord! forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to thyself our souls in the company of the righteous.

رَبَّنَا وَآتِنَا مَا وَعَدتَّنَا عَلَى رُسُلِكَ وَلاَ تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

194. "Our Lord! grant us what Thou didst promise unto us through Thy Messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment:

...إِنَّكَ لاَ تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (١٩٤)

for thou never breakest Thy promise."

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ...

195. And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them:

...أَنِّي لاَ أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ...

"Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: ye are members, one of another;

C500. In Islam the equal status of the sexes is not only recognised but insisted on. If sex distinction, which is a distinction in nature, does not count in spiritual matters, still less of course would count artificial distinctions, such as rank, wealth, position, race, colour, birth, etc,

...فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ وَأُخْرِجُواْ مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُواْ فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُواْ وَقُتِلُواْ...

those who have left their homes, or been driven out therefrom, or suffered harm in My cause, or fought or been slain,

...لأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ ...

verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath;

...ثَوَابًا مِّن عِندِ اللّهِ...

a reward from the presence of Allah,

C501. Here, and in 3:198 below, and in many places elsewhere, stress is laid on the fact that whatever gift, or bliss will come to the righteous, its chief merit will be that it proceeds from Allah Himself.

"Nearness to Allah" expresses it better than any other symbol.

...وَاللّهُ عِندَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ (١٩٥)

and from His presence is the best of rewards."

لاَ يَغُرَّنَّكَ تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فِي الْبِلاَدِ (١٩٦)

196. Let not the strutting about of the unbelievers through the land deceive thee:

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (١٩٧)

197. Little is it for enjoyment; their ultimate abode is Hell:

what an evil bed (to lie on)!

لَكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْاْ رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ...

198. On the other hand, for those who fear their Lord, are gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, therein are they to dwell (for ever),

... نُزُلاً مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ...

a gift from the presence of Allah,

...وَمَا عِندَ اللّهِ خَيْرٌ لِّلأَبْرَارِ(١٩٨)

and that which is in the presence of Allah is the best (bliss) for the righteous.

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَن يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ ...

199. And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in Allah, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them,

...خَاشِعِينَ لِلّهِ لاَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً ...

bowing in humility to Allah:

they will not sell the signs of Allah for a miserable gain!

...أُوْلَـئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ...

for them is a reward with their Lord,

... إِنَّ اللّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (١٩٩)

and Allah is swift in account.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

200. O ye who believe!

...اصْبِرُواْ وَصَابِرُواْ ...

persevere in patience and constancy:

vie in such perseverance;

C502. The full meaning of **Sabr** is to be understood here, viz.: Patience, perseverance, constancy, self-restraint, refusing to be cowed down.

These virtues we are to exercise for ourselves and in relation to others; we are to set an example, so that others may vie with us, and we are to vie with them, lest we fall short; in this way we strengthen each other and bind our mutual relations closer, in our common service to Allah.

... وَرَابِطُواْ وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٢٠٠)

strengthen each other;

and fear Allah; that ye may prosper.

C503. Prosperity (**falah**) here and in other passages is to be understood in a wide sense, including prosperity in our mundane affairs as well as in spiritual progress.

In both cases it implies happiness and the attainment of our wishes, purified by the love of Allah.



يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَن يُخَفِّفَ عَنكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الإِنسَانُ ضَعِيفًا

Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): for man was created weak (in flesh).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Nisa'

النِّسَاء

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is closely connected chronologically with Surah 3. Its subject matter deals with the social problems which the Muslim community had to face immediately after Uhud. While the particular occasion made the necessity urgent, the principles laid down have permanently governed Muslim Law and social practice.

Broadly speaking, the Surah consists of two parts:

1. that dealing with women, orphans, inheritance, marriage, and family rights generally, and

2. that dealing with the recalcitrant in the larger family, the community at Madinah , viz., the Hypocrites and their accomplices.

Summary- It begins with an appeal to the solidarity of mankind, the rights of women and orphans, and the implications of family relationship, including an equitable distribution of property after death (4:1-14 and C. 61).

While the decencies of family life should be enforced, women should be held in honour and their rights recognized, in marriage, property, and inheritance; and this principle of goodness be extended in all beings, great and small (4:15-42, and C. 62).

The sections in Madinah, not yet in the Muslim community, should not go after false gods, but should accept the authority of the Prophet, and obey him. Then it will be their privilege to be admitted to a great and glorious Fellowship (4:43-70, and C. 63).

The Believers should organize in self-defence against their enemies, and beware of the secret plots and mischiefs of the Hypocrites; how deserters should be treated (4:71-91, and C 64).

Caution about the taking of life; recommendations for having places inimical on Islam; religious duties in the midst of war (4:92-104, and C. 65).

Treachery and the lure of evil (4:105-126, and C. 66).

Women and orphans to be justly dealt with; Faith must go with justice, sincerity, and moderation in speech (4:127-152, and CC. 67).

Where People of the Book went wrong, with honourable exceptions (4:153-176, and C. 68).

C.61 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:1-14)

All mankind are one, and mutual rights
Must be respected; the sexes
Must honour, each the other;
Sacred are family relationships
That rise through marriage
And women bearing children;
Orphans need especial loving care;
In trust is held all property;
With duties well-defined;
And after death, due distribution
Should be made in equitable shares
To all whose affection, duty,
And trust shed light and joy
On this our life below.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ...

1. O mankind!
   reverence your Guardian-Lord, Who created you from a single person,

C504. Nafs may mean:

- soul;
- self;
- person, living person;
- will, good pleasure, as in 4:4 below.

... وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا ....

created, of like nature, his mate,

Minha: I follow the construction suggested by Imam Razi.

The particle min would then suggest here a species, a nature, a similarity.

The pronoun ha refers of course to **Nafs**. (R).

.. وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالاً كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاء...

and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءلُونَ بِهِ ...

reverence Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights),

C505. All our mutual rights and duties are referred to Allah. We are His creatures: His Will is the standard and measure of Allah; and our duties are measured by our conformity with His Will.

"Our wills are ours, to make them Thine," says Tennyson (In Memoriam).

Among ourselves (human beings) our mutual rights and duties arise out of Allah's Law, the sense of Right that is implanted in us by Him.

... وَالأَرْحَامَ ...

and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you):

C506. Among the most wonderful mysteries of our nature is that of sex.

The unregenerate male is apt, in the pride of his physical strength, to forget the all-important part which the female plays in his very existence, and in all the social relationships that arise in our collective human lives.

The mother that bore us must ever have our reverence. The wife, through whom we enter parentage, must have our reverence.

Sex, which governs so much of our physical life, and has so much influence on our emotional and higher nature, deserves-not our fear, or our contempt, or our amused indulgence, but-our reverence in the highest sense of the term.

With this fitting introduction we enter on a discussion of women, orphans, and family relationships.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا (١)

for Allah ever watches over you.

وَآتُوا الْيَتَامَى أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ...

2. To orphans restore their property (when they reach their age), nor substitute (your) worthless things for (their) good ones;

... وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَى أَمْوَالِكُمْ ...

and devour not their substance (by mixing it up) with your own.

C507. Justice to orphans is enjoined, and three things are particularly mentioned as temptations in the way of a guardian:

1. He must not postpone restoring all his ward's property when the time comes; subject to 4:5 below.
2. If there is a list of property, it is not enough that that list should be technically followed: the property restored must be of equal value to the property received:

   the same principle applies where there is no list.
3. If property is managed together, or where perishable goods must necessarily be consumed, the strictest probity is necessary when the separation takes place, and this is insisted on.

See also 2:220 and n. C 244.

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا (٢)

For this is indeed a great sin.

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلاَّ تُقْسِطُواْ فِي الْيَتَامَى فَانكِحُواْ مَا طَابَ لَكُم مِّنَ النِّسَاء مَثْنَى وَثُلاَثَ وَرُبَاعَ...

3. If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the **orphans**, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four;

C508. Notice the conditional clause about **orphans,** introducing the rules about marriage.

This reminds us of the immediate occasion of the promulgation of this verse. It was after Uhud, when the Muslim community was left with many orphans and widows and some captives of war. Their treatment was to be governed by principles of the greatest humanity and equity.

The occasion is past, but the principles remain. Marry the orphans if you are quite sure that you will in that way protect their interests and their property, with perfect justice to them and to your own dependants if you have any. If not, make other arrangements for the orphans.

... فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلاَّ تَعْدِلُواْ فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ...

but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess.

... ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَلاَّ تَعُولُواْ (٣)

That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.

C509. The unrestricted number of wives of the "Times of Ignorance" was now strictly limited to a maximum of four, provided you could treat them with equality. (R).

وَآتُواْ النِّسَاء صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً...

4. And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift;

... فَإِن طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَن شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَّرِيئًا (٤)

but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.

وَلاَ تُؤْتُواْ السُّفَهَاء ...

5. To those weak of understanding

C510. This applies to orphans, but the wording is perfectly general, and defines principles like those of Chancery in English Law and the Court of Wards in Indian Law.

Property has not only its rights but also its responsibilities. The owner may not do just what he likes absolutely; his right is limited by the good of his family of which he is a member, and if he is incapable of understanding it, his control should be removed.

This does not mean that he is harshly dealt with. On the contrary his interest must be protected, and he must be treated with special kindness because of his incapacity.

... أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَاماً...

make not over your property, which Allah hath made a means of support for you,

C511. Your property: Ultimately all property belongs to Allah, and is intended for the support of his close relations.

It is held in trust by a particular individual. If he is incapable, he is put aside but gently and with kindness.

While his incapacity remains, the duties and responsibilities devolve on his guardian even more strictly than in the case of the original owner: for he may not take any of the profits for himself unless he is poor, and in that case his remuneration for his trouble must be on a scale that is no more than just and reasonable.

... وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلاً مَّعْرُوفًا (٥)

but feed and clothe them therewith, and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

... وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَى حَتَّىَ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ

6. Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage;

C512. The age of marriage is the age when they reach their majority.

... فَإِنْ آنَسْتُم مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُواْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ...

if then ye find sound judgment in them, release their property to them;

... وَلاَ تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَن يَكْبَرُواْ ...

but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste against their growing up.

... وَمَن كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ وَمَن كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ...

If the guardian is well-off, let him claim no remuneration, but if he is poor, let him have for himself what is just and reasonable.

... فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهِدُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ...

When ye release their property to them, take witnesses in their presence:

... وَكَفَى بِاللّهِ حَسِيبًا (٦)

but all-sufficient is Allah in taking account.

C513. It is good to take human witnesses when you faithfully discharge your trust; but remember that, however fully you satisfy your fellow-men when you give your account to them, there is a stricter account due from you to Allah.

If you are righteous in Allah's eyes, you must follow these stricter standards.

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاء نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالأَقْرَبُونَ...

7. From what is left by parents and those nearest **related** there is a share for men and a share for women,

C514. I have resisted the temptation to translate "next to kin," as this phrase has a technical meaning in Indian Law, referring to certain kinds of heirs, whereas here the people meant are those whose inheritance is to be divided. The shares are specified.

Here the general principles are laid down that females inherit as well as males. and that relatives who have no legal shares, orphans. and indigent people are not to be treated harshly, if present at the division. (R).

... مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا (٧)

whether the property be small or large, a determinate share.

... وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُوْلُواْ الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينُ فَارْزُقُوهُم مِّنْهُ

8. But if at the time of division other relatives, of orphans, or poor, are present, feed them out of the (property),

... وَقُولُواْ لَهُمْ قَوْلاً مَّعْرُوفًا (٨)

and speak to them words of kindness and justice.

... وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكُواْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَافًا خَافُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ

9. Let those (disposing of an estate) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own if they had left a helpless family behind:

... فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللّهَ وَلْيَقُولُواْ قَوْلاً سَدِيدًا (٩)

let them fear Allah, and speak words of appropriate (comfort).

C515. It is a touching argument addressed to those who have to divide an estate.

'How anxious would you be if you had left a helpless family behind?'

If others do so, help and be kind.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَى ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا

10. Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a fire into their own bodies:

... وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا (١٠)

they will soon be enduring a blazing fire!

Section 2

يُوصِيكُمُ اللهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ ...

11. Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females:

C516. The principles of inheritance law are laid down in broad outline in the Quran; the precise details have been worked out on the basis of the Prophet's practice and that of his Companions, and by interpretation and analogy.

Muslim jurists have collected a vast amount of learning on this subject, and this body of law is enough by itself to form the subject of life-long study. Here we shall deal only with the broad principles to be gathered from the Text, as interpreted by the Jurists.

1. The power of testamentary disposition extends over only one-third of the Property; the remaining two-thirds are distributed among heirs as laid down.
2. All distribution takes place after the legacies and debts (including funeral expenses) have first been paid.
3. Legacies cannot be left to any of the heirs included in the scheme of distribution; or

   it will amount to upsetting the shares and undue preference of one heir to another.
4. Generally, but not always, the male takes a share double that of a female in his own category.

... فَإِن كُنَّ نِسَاء فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ وَإِن كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا

النِّصْفُ ...

if only daughters, two or **more**, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half.

C517. At first sight, the Arabic words seem to mean: "if more than two daughters." But the alternative in the

next clause is: "if only one daughter." Logically, therefore, the first clause must mean:

"if daughters, two or more."

This is the general interpretation, and is confirmed by the supplementary provision in 4:176 at the end of the Surah, which should be read along with this.

... وَلأبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِن كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ...

For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left children;

... فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرِثَهُ أَبَوَاهُ فَلأُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ...

if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third;

... فَإِن كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلأُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ...

if the deceased left brothers (or sisters), the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases is) after the payment of legacies and debts.

... آبَآؤُكُمْ وَأَبناؤُكُمْ لاَ تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعاً...

Ye know not whether your parents or your children are nearest to you in benefit.

... فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللّهِ إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ عَلِيما حَكِيمًا (١١)

These are settled portions ordained by Allah and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

C518. The verse deals with the portions allotted to

a. children, and

b. parents.

The next verse deals with the portions allotted to

c. husband or wife of the deceased, and

d. collaterals.

The children's shares are fixed, but their amount will depend upon what goes to the parents.

- If both parents are living, and there are also children, both father and mother take a sixth each:
- if only one parent is living, he or she takes his or her sixth; and the rest goes to the children.
- If the parents are living, and there is no child or other heir, the mother gets a third (and the father the remaining two-thirds);
- if there are no children, but there are brothers or sisters (this is interpreted strictly in the plural), the mother has a sixth, and the father apparently the residue, as the father excludes collaterals.

This is far from being an exhaustive statement, but it establishes the proposition that children and parents have always some share if they survive, but their shares are affected by the existence and number of the heirs in these categories.

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ...

12. In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child;

... فَإِن كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْنَ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ

يُوصِينَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ...

but if they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts.

C519. The husband takes a half of his deceased wife's property if she leaves no child, the rest going to residuaries; if she leaves a child, the husband gets only a fourth.

Following the rule that the female share is generally half the male share, the widow gets a fourth of her deceased husband's property, if he leaves no children, and an eighth if he leaves children.

If there are more widows than one, their collective share is a fourth or an eighth as the case may be; inter se they divide equally.

... وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ ...

In what ye leave, their share is a fourth, if ye leave no child;

... فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوصُونَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ...

but if ye leave a child, they get an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts.

... وَإِن كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورَثُ كَلَالَةً أَو امْرَأَةٌ ...

If the man or woman whose inheritance is in question, has left neither ascendants nor **descendants**,

C520. The word in Arabic is **kalalalh**, which is so construed usually. But it was nowhere defined authoritatively in the lifetime of the Messenger.

This was one of the three terms about which Hadhrat Umar wished that the Messenger had defined them in his lifetime, the other two being the share of grandfather, and riba (usury).

On the accepted definition, we are concerned with the inheritance of a person who has left no descendant or ascendant (however distant), but only collaterals, with or without a widow or widower. If there is a widow or widower surviving, she or he takes the share as already defined, before the collaterals come in.

... وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ...

but has left a brother or a sister, each one of the two gets a sixth;

C521. A **"brother or sister"** is here interpreted to mean a uterine brother or sister, i.e., a brother or sister by the same mother but not by the same father, as the case of full brothers and sisters or brothers and sisters by the same father but different mothers is understood to be dealt with later, in the last verse of this Surah.

The uterine brother or sister, if only one survives, takes a sixth; if more than one survive, they take a third collectively, and divide among themselves; this on the supposition that there are no descendants or ascendants, however remote.

There may, however, be a widow or widower surviving: she or he takes her or his share, as already specified. The shares of collaterals generally are calculated on a complicated system which cannot be described in a brief note.

For these, and the rules about Residuaries ('Asaba) reference should be made to special legal treatises.

... فَإِن كَانُوٓاْ أَكْثَرَ مِن ذَٰلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاء فِي الثُّلُثِ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَى

بِهَآ أَوْ دَيْنٍ غَيْرَ مُضَآرٍّ...

but if more than two, they share in a third; after payment of legacies and debts; so that no loss is caused (to anyone).

C522. Debts (in which funeral expenses take first rank) and legacies are the first charge on the estate of a deceased person, before distribution takes place.

But equity and fair dealing should be observed in all matters, so that no one's interests are prejudiced. Thus funeral expenses should be reasonable; debts must be genuine and not reckless debts; and the shares must be calculated with fairness.

... وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللّهِ وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ (١٢)

Thus is it ordained by Allah, and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللّهِ...

13. Those are limits set by Allah:

... وَمَن يُطِعِ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever)

... وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٣)

and that will be the Supreme achievement.

C522a. Cf. 44:57, n. 4733. (R).

وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا...

14. But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress His limits will be admitted to a fire,

... خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَلَهُ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (١٤)

to abide therein: and they shall have a humiliating punishment.

C.62 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:15-42)

What can be a holier cement to Society
Han that women should be chaste and pure.
And crimes against sex rooted out?
Let decency, kindness, and justice
Prevail in all sex relationship;
Let marriage be cherished and carefully guarded;
Women's rights secured; family jars
Adjusted; and all life lived
In faith, charity, and kindness sincere
To all our fellow-creatures.

Section 3

... وَاللاَّتِي يَأْتِينَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِن نِّسَآئِكُمْ

15. If any of your women are guilty of **lewdness**,

C523. Most commentators understand this to refer to adultery or fornication; in that case they consider that the punishment was altered by the later verse, 24:2. But I think it refers to unnatural crime between women, analogous to unnatural crime between men in 4:16 below; because,

1. no punishment is specified here for the man, as would be the case where a man was involved in the crime;
2. the word, al *laati*, the purely feminine plural of al *lati*, is used for the parties to the crime;
3. the punishment is indefinite; see the next note but one.

... فَاسْتَشْهِدُواْ عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعةً مِّنكُمْ...

take the evidence of four (reliable) witnesses from amongst you against them;

C524. To protect the honor of women, stricter evidence is required, i.e., the evidence of four instead of the usual two witnesses.

It is the same for adultery (see 24:4.).

... فَإِن شَهِدُواْ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّىَ يَتَوَفَّاهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ ...

and if they testify, confine them to houses until death do claim them,

... أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلاً (١٥)

or Allah ordain for them some (other) way.

C525. Keep them in prison until some definite order is received. Those who take the crime to be adultery or fornication construe this definite order ("some other way") to mean some definite pronouncement by the Prophet under inspiration; this was the punishment of flogging under 24:2. for fornication, and stoning to death under the Prophet's directives for adultery.

If we understand the crime to be unnatural crime, we might presume, in the absence of any definite order ("some other way") that the punishment would be similar to that for men in the next verse. The Prophet's Sunnah has prescribed capital punishment although the exact method is left indefinite. (R).

وَاللَّذَانَ يَأْتِيَانِهَا مِنكُمْ فَآذُوهُمَا فَإِن تَابَا ...

16. If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both.

... وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَعْرِضُواْ عَنْهُمَا...

If they repent and amend, leave them alone;

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا (١٦)

for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِن قَرِيبٍ ...

17. Allah accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards;

... فَأُوْلَـئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

to them will Allah turn in mercy;

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ عَلِيماً حَكِيماً (١٧)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ...

18. Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil,

C526. Note the fine touch.

A sin may be fashionable, and people may sin together without compunction. When one of them is faced with Death, he repents, but that sort of repentance is no good.

... حَتَّى إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الآنَ...

until death faces one of them, and he says, "Now have I repented indeed;"

... وَلاَ الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ...

nor of those who die rejecting faith: .

... أُوْلَـئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٨)

for them have We prepared a punishment most grievous.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَن تَرِثُواْ النِّسَاء كَرْهًا...

19. O ye who believe! ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will.

C527. Among many nations, including Arabs in the Days of Ignorance, a step-son or brother took possession of a dead man's widow or widows along with his goods and chattels. This shameful custom is forbidden.

See also 4:22 below.

... وَلاَ تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُواْ بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلاَّ أَن يَأْتِينَ

بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ...

Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may take away part of the dower ye have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness;

C528. Another trick, to detract from the freedom of married women was to treat them badly and force them to sue for a *Khul'a* divorce (see 2:229, n. 258) or

its equivalent in pre-Islamic custom, when the dower could be claimed back. This is also forbidden. Or

the harshness may be exercised in another way: a divorced woman may be prevented by those who have control of her, from remarrying unless she remits her dower.

All kinds of harshness are forbidden.

... وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ...

on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity.

... فَإِن كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَن تَكْرَهُواْ شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا

كَثِيرًا (١٩)

If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.

وَإِنْ أَرَدتُّمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنطَاراً فَلاَ تَأْخُذُواْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا...

20. But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back:

C529. Treasure: Qintar; a Talent of gold:

see 3:14, first note.

... أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بُهْتَاناً وَإِثْماً مُّبِيناً (٢٠)

would ye take it by slander and a manifest wrong?

وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنكُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (٢١)

21. And how could ye take it when ye have gone in unto each other, and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?

وَلاَ تَنكِحُواْ مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُم مِّنَ النِّسَاء إِلاَّ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ...

22. And marry not women whom your fathers married, except what is past:

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَمَقْتًا وَسَاء سَبِيلاً (٢٢)

it was shameful and odious, an abominable custom indeed.

C530. See above: 4:19, n. 527.

Section 4

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

23. Prohibited to you (for marriage) are:

C531. This Table of Prohibited Degrees agrees in the main with what is usually accepted among all nations, except in minor details. It begins in the last verse (with father's widows or divorcees).

The scheme is drawn up on the assumption that the person who proposes to marry is a man: if it is a woman,

the same scheme will apply, mutatis mutandis: it will read: "your fathers, sons, brothers," etc.; or

you can always read it from the husband's view of relationship, as there must always be a husband in a marriage.

... أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ...

your mother, daughters, sisters,

C532.

"Mother" includes grandmother (through the father or mother), great grandmother, etc.;

"daughter" includes grand-daughter (through son or daughter), great grand daughter, etc.;

"sister," includes full-sister and half-sister.

"Father's sister" includes grandfather's sister, etc., and

"mother's sister" includes grandmother's sister, etc.

... وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الأَخ وَبَنَاتُ الأُخْتِ ...

father's sisters, mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters,

... وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللاَّتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ...

foster-mothers (who gave you suck), foster-sisters;

C533. "Fosterage" or milk-relationships play an important part in Muslim Law, and count like blood-relationships:

it would therefore seem that not only foster-mothers and foster-sisters, but foster-mother's sister, etc., all come within the prohibited degrees.

... وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَائِبُكُمُ اللاَّتِي فِي حُجُورِكُم مِّن نِّسَآئِكُمُ اللاَّتِي

دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ ...

your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in,

C534. It is generally held that "under your guardianship" is a description, not a condition. (R).

... فَإِن لَّمْ تَكُونُواْ دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ...

no prohibition if ye have not gone in; (those who have been)

... وَحَلاَئِلُ أَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلاَبِكُمْ ...

wives of your sons proceeding from your loins;

C535. "Sons" includes grandsons, but excludes adopted sons, or persons treated as such of the words "proceeding from your loins."

... وَأَن تَجْمَعُواْ بَيْنَ الأُخْتَيْنِ إِلاَّ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ...

and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past;

C536. The bar against two sisters in marriage together applies to aunt and niece together, but not to deceased wife's sister after the wife dies.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٢٣)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

... وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاء إِلاَّ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

24. Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess.

C537. Whom your right hands possess: i.e., captives in a Jihad. (R).

... كِتَابَ اللّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ...

Thus hath Allah ordained (prohibitions) against you:

... وَأُحِلَّ لَكُم مَّا وَرَاء ذَلِكُمْ أَن تَبْتَغُواْ بِأَمْوَالِكُم مُّحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ...

except for these, all others are lawful, provided ye seek (them in marriage) with gifts from your property, desiring chastity, not lust.

C538. After defining the prohibited degrees, the verse proceeds to say that women other than those specified may be sought in marriage, but even so, not from motives of lust, but in order to promote chastity between the sexes.

Marriage in the original Arabic is here described by a word which suggests a fortress (hisn): marriage is, therefore, the fortress of chastity.

... فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ...

Seeing that ye derive benefit from them, give them their dowers (at least) as prescribed;

C539. As the woman in marriage surrenders her person, so the man also must surrender. at least some of his property according to his means. And this gives rise to the law of Dower.

A minimum dower is prescribed, but it is not necessary to stick to the minimum, and in the new relationship created, the parties are recommended to act towards each other with the greatest confidence and liberality.

... وَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا تَرَاضَيْتُم بِهِ مِن بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ ...

but if after a dower is prescribed, ye agree mutually (to vary it), there is no blame on you,

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٢٤)

and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَمَن لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنكُمْ طَوْلاً أن يَنكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

25. If any of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women,

... فَمِن مِّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُم مِّن فَتَيَاتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

they may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess:

C540. That is, captives taken in a Jihad:

If you seek such a person in marriage, do it from no base motives. Safeguard your faith, and see that she too does believe.

In that case, after all, she is of the human brotherhood, and her condition is accidental and redeemable.

If the slave bore a child to her master, she would become free. (R).

... وَاللّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُمْ...

and Allah hath full knowledge about your faith.

... بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ فَانكِحُوهُنَّ بِإِذْنِ أَهْلِهِنَّ...

Ye are one from another: wed them with the leave of their owners,

... وَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مُحْصَنَاتٍ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحَاتٍ وَلاَ مُتَّخِذَاتِ أَخْدَانٍ...

and give them their dowers, according to what is reasonable: they should be chaste, not lustful, nor taking paramours:

... فَإِذَا أُحْصِنَّ فَإِنْ أَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنَاتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ...

when they are taken in wedlock, if they fall into shame, their punishment is half that for free women.

... ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ وَأَن تَصْبِرُواْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ...

This (permission) is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that ye practice self-restraint:

... وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٥)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 5

يُرِيدُ اللّهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ ...

26. Allah doth wish to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you;

... وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ...

and (He doth wish to) turn to you (in Mercy):

... وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٦)

and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَاللّهُ يُرِيدُ أَن يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ...

27. Allah doth wish to turn to you,

... وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَن تَمِيلُواْ مَيْلاً عَظِيمًا (٢٧)

but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that ye should turn away (from Him), far, far away.

يُرِيدُ اللّهُ أَن يُخَفِّفَ عَنكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الإِنسَانُ ضَعِيفًا (٢٨)

28. Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): for man was created weak (in flesh).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

29. O ye who believe!

... لاَ تَأْكُلُواْ أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلاَّ أَن تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَن

تَرَاضٍ مِّنكُمْ...

eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: but let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual goodwill:

C541. Let me paraphrase this verse, for there is profound meaning in it.

1. All your property you hold in trust, whether it is in your name, or belongs to the community, or to

people over whom you have control. To waste is wrong.

2. In 2:188 the same phrase occurred, to caution us against greed.

   Here it occurs, to encourage us to increase property by economic use (traffic and trade), recalling Christ's parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), where the servants who had increased their master's wealth were promoted and the servant who had hoarded was cast into darkness.

3. We are warned that our waste may mean our own destruction ("nor kill or destroy yourselves").

   But there is a more general meaning also:

   we must be careful of our own and other people's lives. We must commit no violence.

   This is the opposite of "trade and traffic by mutual good-will."

4. Our violence to our own brethren is particularly preposterous, seeing that Allah has loved and showered His mercies on us and all His creatures.

... وَلاَ تَقْتُلُواْ أَنفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا (٢٩)

nor kill (or destroy) yourselves:

for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful.

...وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِ نَارًا

30. If any do that in rancor and injustice, soon shall We cast them into the fire:

... وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللّهِ يَسِيرًا (٣٠)

and easy it is for Allah.

... إِن تَجْتَنِبُواْ كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ

31. If ye (but) eschew the most heinous of the things which ye are forbidden to do, We shall expel out of you all the evil in you,

... وَنُدْخِلْكُم مُّدْخَلاً كَرِيمًا (٣١)

and admit you to a Gate of great honor.

وَلاَ تَتَمَنَّوْاْ مَا فَضَّلَ اللّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

32. And in no wise covet those things in which Allah hath bestowed his gifts more freely on some of you than on others:

C542. Men and women have gifts from Allah -some greater than others. They seem unequal. but we are assured that Allah has allotted them by a scheme by which people receive what they earn.

If this does not appear clear in our sight, let us remember that we have no full knowledge but Allah has. We must not be jealous if other people have more than we have-in wealth or position or strength or honour or talent or happiness.

Probably things are equalized in the aggregate or in the long run, or equated to needs and merits on a scale which we cannot appraise. If we want more, instead of being jealous or covetous, we should pray to Allah and place before Him our needs. Though He knows all, and has no need of our prayer, our prayer may reveal to ourselves our shortcomings and enable us to deserve more of Allah's bounty or make ourselves fit for it.

... لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُواْ وَلِلنِّسَاء نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ...

to men is allotted what they earn,

and to women what they earn:

... وَاسْأَلُواْ اللّهَ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

but ask Allah of His bounty:

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٣٢)

for Allah hath full knowledge of all things.

وَلِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِيَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالأقْرَبُونَ...

33. To (benefit) everyone, We have appointed sharers and **heirs** to property left by parents and relatives.

C543. Mawali, plural of *Maula*; from the root *wala*, to be near in place or relationship, to follow, *Maula* may therefore mean:

1. nearly related,
2. heir,
3. sharer or partner;

these three meanings are implied here;

4. neighbour, or friend, or protector, or client (44:41);
5. lord or master (16:76).

... وَالَّذِينَ عَقَدَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَآتُوهُمْ نَصِيبَهُمْ ...

To those also, to whom your right hand was pledged, give their due portion:

C544. When the emigration took place from Makkah to Madinah, bonds and links of brotherhood were established between the Emigrants and the Helpers, and they shared in each other's inheritance.

Later, when the Community was solidly established, and relations with those left behind in Makkah were resumed, the rights of blood-relations in Makkah, and the Helper-brethren in Madinah were both safeguarded. This is the particular meaning.

The more general meaning is similar; respect your ties of blood, of neighbourhood, and of friendly compacts and understandings, Be just to all.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا (٣٣)

for truly Allah is Witness to all things.

Section 6

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ ...

34. Men are the protectors and maintainers of women,

C545. Qawwam:

- one who stands firm in another's business, protects his interests, and looks after his affairs- or

- it may be, standing firm in his own business, managing affairs, with a steady purpose.

Cf. 4:135.

... بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُواْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ...

because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.

... فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّهُ ...

Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard.

C546. Or the sentence may be rendered:

> "and protect (the husband's interests) in his absence, as Allah has protected them."

If we take the rendering as in the text, the meaning is:

> the good wife is obedient and harmonious in her husband's presence, and in his absence guards his reputation and property and her own virtue, as ordained by Allah.

If we take the rendering as in the note, we reach the same result in a different way:

- the good wife, in her husband's absence, remembering how Allah has given her a sheltered position, does everything to justify that position by guarding her own virtue and his reputation and property.

... وَاللاَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ ...

As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first),

C547. In case of family jars four steps are mentioned, to be taken in that order:

1. perhaps verbal advice or admonition may be sufficient;
2. if not, sex relations may be suspended;
3. if this is not sufficient, some slight physical correction may be administered:

but Imam Shafi'i considers this inadvisable, though permissible, and all authorities are unanimous in deprecating any sort of cruelty, even of the nagging kind, as mentioned in the next clause;

4. if all this fails, a family council is recommended in 4:35 below.

... وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ...

(next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly);

... فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلاَ تَبْغُواْ عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلاً ...

but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance):

C548. Temper, nagging, sarcasm, speaking at each other in other people's presence, reverting to past faults which should be forgiven and forgotten,-all this is forbidden. And the reason given is characteristic of Islam.

You must live all your life as in the presence of Allah, Who is high above us, but Who watches over us.

How petty and contemptible will our little squabbles appear in His presence!

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا (٣٤)

for Allah is Most High, Great (above you all).

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُواْ حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ...

35. If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers;

C549. An excellent plan for settling family disputes, without too much publicity or mud-throwing, or resort to the chicaneries of the law.

The Latin countries recognise this plan in their legal systems. It is a pity that Muslims do not resort to it universally, as they should.

The arbiters from each family would know the idiosyncrasies of both parties, and would be able, with Allah's help to effect a real reconciliation.

... وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِن يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا...

if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا خَبِيرًا (٣٥)

for Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا...

36. Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him:

C550. The essence of Islam is to serve Allah and do good to your fellow-creatures. This is wider and more comprehensive than "Love God and love your neighbour".

For it includes duties to animals as our fellow-creatures, and emphasises practical service rather than sentiment.

... وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى ...

and do good to;

- parents,
- kinsfolk,
- orphans,
- those in need,
- neighbors who are near,

C551. Neighbors who are near: that is, in local situation as well as intimate relationships, just as neighbors who are strangers includes those whom we do not know or who live away from us or in a different sphere altogether.

... وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ...

neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet),

C552. The Companion by your side may be your intimate friends and associates, just as the way-farer you meet may be a casual acquaintance on your travels.

This last is much wider than the "stranger within your gate."

... وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ...

and what your right hands possess:

C553. What your right hands possess: For the meaning of the phrase see n. 537 above. (R).

... إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالاً فَخُورًا (٣٦)

for Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious;

C554. Real deeds of service and kindness proceed, not from showing off or from a superior sort of condescension (cf. "White Man's Burden"), but from a frank recognition of our own humility and the real claims, before Allah, of all our fellow-creatures.

For in our mutual needs we are equal before Allah, or perhaps the best of us (as the world sees us) may be worse than the worst of us (from the same point of view).

الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

37. (Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoin niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which Allah hath bestowed on them;

C555. Arrogance is one reason why our deeds of love and kindness do not thrive.

Another is niggardliness or selfishness.

Allah does not love either the one or the other, for they both proceed from want of love of Allah, or faith in Allah.

Niggardly is the worldly wise man who not only refuses to spend himself in service, but by example and precept prevents others from doing so, as otherwise he would be made odious by comparison, before his fellow-creatures.

So he either makes a virtue of his caution, or hides the gifts which have been given him-wealth, position, talent, etc.

... وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا (٣٧)

for We have prepared, for those who resist faith, a punishment that steeps them in contempt.

C556. Note how the punishment fits the crime.

The niggard holds other people in contempt, and in doing so, becomes himself contemptible.

وَالَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَلاَ بِالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

38. (Nor) those who spend of their substance, to be seen of men, but have no faith in Allah and the Last Day:

C557. A fault opposed to niggardliness, and equally opposed to true Charity, is to spend lavishly to be seen of men.

It is mere hypocrisy: there is no love in it, either for Allah or for man.

... وَمَن يَكُنِ الشَّيْطَانُ لَهُ قَرِينًا فَسَاءَ قَرِينًا (٣٨)

if any take the Evil One for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is!

... وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ آمَنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ

39. And what burden were it on them if they had faith in Allah and in the Last Day,

... وَأَنفَقُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّهُ...

and they spent out of what Allah hath given them for sustenance?

C558. Sustenance: physical, intellectual, spiritual-everything pertaining to life and growth.

Our being is from Allah, and we must therefore spend ourselves freely for Allah.

How can it be a burden?

It is merely a response to the demand of our own healthy nature.

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ بِهِم عَلِيمًا (٣٩)

for Allah hath full knowledge of them.

إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِن تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُضَاعِفْهَا...

40. Allah is never unjust in the least degree: if there is any good (done),

He doubleth it,

... وَيُؤْتِ مِن لَّدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٤٠)

and giveth from His own presence a great reward.

C559. Any little good of our own comes from the purity of our heart. Its results in the world are doubled and multiplied by Allah's grace and mercy; but an even greater reward comes from Him: His good pleasure, which brings us nearer to Him

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ...

41. How then if We brought from each people a witness,

... وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَـؤُلاء شَهِيدًا (٤١)

and We brought thee as a witness against these people!

C560. Each Prophet and Leader is a witness for his People and his contemporaries-for those who accept Allah, and against those who reject Him.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَعَصَوُاْ الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّى بِهِمُ الأَرْضُ...

42. On that day those who reject faith and disobey the Messenger will wish that the earth were made one with them:

C561. Those who reject Allah's message will wish, when their eyes are opened, that they were reduced to dust, for existence itself will be agony to them.

They might like to hide in the dust, but nothing is hidden from Allah. All their past will stand out clear before Him.

... وَلاَ يَكْتُمُونَ اللّهَ حَدِيثًا (٤٢)

but never will they hide a single fact from Allah!

C.63 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:43-70)

By clean and pure, and seek not occasions
For quibbles, nor go after sorcery
Or false gods. Be faithful
In your trusts, learn obedience,
And settle your quarrels under the guidance
Of Allah's Messenger. Every keep away
From hypocrisy and every kind of falsehood.
Then will you be admitted to a glorious Fellowship
With the highest and noblest in the spiritual world.

Section 7

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَقْرَبُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَارَى حَتَّىَ تَعْلَمُواْ مَا تَقُولُونَ...

43. O ye who believe! approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say,

C562. The reference is either to a state of intoxication or to a dazed state of mind on account of drowsiness or some other cause. Or perhaps both are implied.

Before the prohibition of intoxicants altogether was promulgated, it was at least unbecoming that people should come to prayers in such a state. For prayers it is

only right that we should collect our whole minds and approach Allah in a spirit of reverence.

"Prayers" (Salah) here may mean "a place of prayer," a Mosque:

the resulting meaning would be the same

... وَلاَ جُنُبًا إِلاَّ عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىَ تَغْتَسِلُواْ...

nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (except when traveling on the road), until after washing your whole body

... وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاء أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّن الْغَآئِطِ أَوْ لاَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاء...

- if ye are ill, or
- on a journey, or
- one of you cometh from offices of nature, or
- ye have been in contact with women,

... فَلَمْ تَجِدُواْ مَاء فَتَيَمَّمُواْ صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُواْ بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ...

and ye find no water,

then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands.

C563. The strictest cleanliness and purity of mind and body are required, especially at the time of prayer.

But there are circumstances when water for ablutions is not easily obtainable, especially in the dry conditions of Arabia, and then washing with dry sand or clean earth is recommended. Four such circumstances are mentioned: the

- two last when washing is specially required;
- the two first when washing may be necessary, but it may not be easy to get water.

For a man, when he is ill, cannot walk out far to get water, and a man on a journey has no full control over his supplies.

In all four cases, where water cannot be got, cleaning with dry sand or dry earth is recommended. This is called **Tayammum**.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا (٤٣)

For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشْتَرُونَ الضَّلَالَةَ...

44. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? They traffic in error,

C564. Cf. 3:23 and n. 366.

... وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيلَ (٤٤)

and wish that ye should lose the right path.

... وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَعْدَائِكُمْ

45. But Allah hath full knowledge of your enemies:

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ نَصِيرًا (٤٥)

Allah is enough for a Protector, and Allah is enough for a Helper.

مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ...

46. Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say:

... سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا ...

"We hear and we **disobey**;" and

... وَاسْمَعْ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ...

"Hear what is not heard":

C565. See 2:93, n. 98.

A trick of the Jews was to twist words and expressions, so as to ridicule the most solemn teachings of Faith. Where they should have said, "We hear and we obey,"

they said aloud, "We hear," and whispered. "We disobey."

Where they should have said respectfully. "We hear," they added in a whisper, "May you not hear," by way of ridicule.

Where they claimed the attention of the Prophet, they used an ambiguous word apparently harmless, but in their intention disrespectful. (R).

... وَرَاعِنَا لَيًّا بِأَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَطَعْنًا فِي الدِّينِ ...

and "Ra'ina;" with a twist of their tongues and a slander to faith.

C566. See 2:104, n. 106.

"Raina" if used respectfully in the Arabic way, would have meant

"Please attend to us."

With a twist of their tongue, they suggested an insulting meaning, such as

"O thou that takest us to pasture!" or

in Hebrew. "Our bad one!"

... وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَاسْمَعْ وَانظُرْنَا ...

If only they had said:

"We hear and we obey;" and "Do hear;" and "Do look at us":

... لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَأَقْوَمَ...

it would have been better for them, and more proper;

... وَلَكِن لَّعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ...

but Allah hath cursed them, for their unbelief;

... فَلاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (٤٦)

and but few of them will believe.

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ ...

47. O ye People of the Book!

... آمِنُوا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُم...

believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you,

... مِّن قَبْلِ أَن نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَى أَدْبَارِهَا...

before We change the face and fame of some (of you) beyond all recognition, and turn them hindwards,

C567. Literally, "before We obliterate some features (or faces) and turn them front to back (or back to front)": an Arabic idiom, which must be translated freely to yield its proper meaning in English.

The face is the chief expression of a man's own real essence; it is also the index of his fame and estimation. The People of the Book had been specially favoured by Allah with revelations. If they proved themselves unworthy, they lost their "face".

Their eminence would, owing to their own conduct, be turned into degradation. Others would take their place.

The first shall be last and the last shall be first: Matt. 19:30.

... أَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّا أَصْحَابَ السَّبْتِ...

or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-breakers:

C568. Cf. 2:65 and n. 79.

... وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولاً (٤٧)

for the decision of Allah must be carried out.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاء...

48. Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth;

... وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَى إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا (٤٨)

to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed.

C569. Just as in an earthly kingdom the worst crime is that of treason, as it cuts at the very existence of the State, so in the Divine Kingdom, the unforgivable sin is that of contumacious treason against Allah by putting up Allah's creatures in rivalry against Him. This is rebellion against the Creator.

It is what Plato would call the "lie in the soul."

But even here, if the rebellion is through ignorance, and is followed by sincere repentance and amendment, Allah's Mercy is always open (4:17).

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُزَكُّونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ...

49. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who claim sanctity for themselves?

C570. The sanctimonious or self-sanctified people are the farthest from sanctity or purity, which can only proceed from Allah. They cannot play with Allah's Truth and yet go on claiming to be guided and purified or justified by Allah.

Their falsehood in itself condemns them: no further proof is needed of their selfishness and evil.

... بَلِ اللَّهُ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ ...

Nay, but Allah doth sanctify whom He pleaseth

... وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا (٤٩)

but never will they fail to receive justice in the least little thing.

C571. Literally, the small skin in the groove of a date stone, a thing of no value; **fatila.**

انظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ...

50. Behold! how they invent a lie against Allah!

... وَكَفَىٰ بِهِ إِثْمًا مُّبِينًا (٥٠)

but that by itself is a manifest sin!

Section 8

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ ...

51. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were given a portion of the Book?

C572. Cf. 3:23 and n. 366.

The phrase also occurs in 4:44.

... يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ...

They believe in sorcery and evil,

C573. The word I have translated Sorcery is **jibt**, which may mean divination, sorcery, magic, or any false object of belief or worship, such as an idol.

The word I have translated Evil (here and in 2:256) is **Taghut**, which means the evil one, the one who exceeds all bounds, Satan: or it may refer to some idol worshipped by the Pagan Arabs, with whom the Jews of Madinah were intriguing against the Holy Prophet.

The Jews had taken much to sorcery, magic, divination, and such superstitions.

... وَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ هَؤُلاء أَهْدَى مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ سَبِيلاً (٥١)

and say to the unbelievers that they are better guided in the (right) way than the believers!

أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّهُ...

52. They are (men) whom Allah hath cursed:

... وَمَن يَلْعَنِ اللّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا (٥٢)

and those whom Allah hath cursed, thou wilt find, have no one to help.

C574. The Jews were then seeking the aid of the Makkan Pagans against Muhammad, but far from getting any help from them, they and the Pagans were both overthrown.

That was the immediate occasion, but the words have a perfectly general -a universal- meaning.

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ ...

53. Have they a share in dominion or power?

... فَإِذًا لاَّ يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا (٥٣)

Behold, they give not a farthing to their fellow-men!

C575. The word I have translated farthing is **naqir**, the groove in a date stone, a thing of no value whatever.

Close-fistedness and envy are among the worst forms of selfishness, and appear specially incongruous in people of power, authority, or influence, from whom is expected generosity in giving and generosity in seeing other people's prosperity or happiness.

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

54. Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of His bounty?

... فَقَدْ آتَيْنَآ آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُم مُّلْكًا عَظِيمًا (٥٤)

But We had already given the people of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom.

C576. Such as the kingdoms of David and Solomon, for they had international fame.

فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَمِنْهُم مَّن صَدَّ عَنْهُ ...

55. Some of them believed and some of them averted their faces from him:

... وَكَفَى بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا (٥٥)

and enough is hell for a burning fire.

C577. Envy is like the eternal fire, which is in itself a hell.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ نَارًا...

56. Those who reject Our Signs, We shall soon cast into the fire:

... كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَّلْنَاهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ...

as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٥٦)

for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ...

57. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit to gardens,

... تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَّهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ...

with rivers flowing beneath, their eternal home:

therein shall they have companions pure and holy:

C578. Cf. 2:25 and n. 44.

... وَنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلاًّ ظَلِيلاً (٥٧)

We shall admit them to shades, cool and ever deepening.

C579. The Garden is contrasted with the Fire: the shade is contrasted with the roasting, Evil grows with what it feeds on.

So goodness and felicity grow with their practice. The good may be alone to start with, but (unlike evil ones) they get Holy Companions.

Just as agony increases with what it suffers (typified by fresh skins growing as the old ones burns out), so felicity finds deeper and deeper meaning (typified by the shades in a garden, which grow deeper and cooler as you proceed into the interior).

إِنَّ اللّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَن تُؤدُّواْ الأَمَانَاتِ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا...

58. Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due;

... وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَن تَحْكُمُواْ بِالْعَدْلِ...

and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice:

... إِنَّ اللّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُم بِهِ...

verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you!

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (٥٨)

for Allah is He who heareth and seeth all things.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

59. O ye who believe!

... أَطِيعُوا اللّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِي الأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ ...

obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you.

C580. Uli al amr: those charged with authority or responsibility or decision, or the settlement of affairs.

All ultimate authority rests in Allah. Prophets of Allah derive their authority from Him.

As Islam makes no sharp division between sacred and secular affairs, it expects governments to be imbued with righteousness.

Likewise Islam expects Muslims to respect the authority of such government for otherwise there can be no order or discipline. (R).

... فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ ...

If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger,

... إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day:

... ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلاً (٥٩)

that is best, and most suitable for final determination.

Section 9

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ...

60. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to thee and to those before thee?

... يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَتَحَاكَمُوا إِلَى الطَّاغُوتِ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَن يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ...

Their (real) wish is to resort together for judgment (in their disputes) to the Evil One, though they were ordered to reject him.

... وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَن يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالاً بَعِيدًا (٦٠)

But Satan's wish is to lead them astray far away (from the Right).

C581. The immediate reference was to the Hypocrites (*Munafiqin*) of Madinah but the words are general, and the evil of hypocrisy has to be dealt with in all ages.

The type of these men is what is called Mr. Facing-both-ways in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress."

Such men declare that they are always with the Right, but calmly intrigue with Evil and Injustice, and even make Injustice their judge if their personal interests are served in that way.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْاْ إِلَى مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ...

61. When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah hath revealed, and to the Messenger":

... رَأَيْتَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنكَ صُدُودًا (٦١)

thou seest the Hypocrites avert their faces from thee in disgust.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ...

62. How then, when they are seized by misfortune, because of the deeds which their hands have sent forth?

... ثُمَّ جَآؤُوكَ يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللّهِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلاَّ إِحْسَانًا وَتَوْفِيقًا (٦٢)

Then they come to thee, swearing by Allah: "We meant no more than goodwill and conciliation!"

أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

63. Those men, Allah knows what is in their hearts;

... فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُل لَّهُمْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلاً بَلِيغًا (٦٣)

so keep clear of them, but admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls.

C582. How should hypocrites be treated?

To take them into your confidence would of course be foolish. To wage unrelenting war against them may

destroy the hope of reforming them and purging them of their hypocrisy.

The Prophet of Allah keeps clear of their wiles, but at the same time, does not hesitate to show them the error of their ways, nor to put in a word in season, to penetrate their hearts and win them back to Allah.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلاَّ لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ...

64. We sent not a Messenger, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of Allah.

... وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذ ظَّلَمُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ جَآؤُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُواْ اللّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ ...

If they had only, when they were unjust to themselves, come unto thee and asked Allah's forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them,

... لَوَجَدُواْ اللّهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا (٦٤)

they would have found Allah indeed Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

فَلاَ وَرَبِّكَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىَ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ...

65. But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them,

... ثُمَّ لاَ يَجِدُواْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُواْ تَسْلِيمًا (٦٥)

and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.

C583. The test of true Faith is not mere lip profession, but bringing all our doubts and disputes to the one in whom we profess faith.

Further, when a decision is given we are not only to accept it. but find in our inmost souls no difficulty and no resistance, but on the contrary a joyful acceptance springing from the conviction of our own faith.

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنِ اقْتُلُواْ أَنفُسَكُمْ أَوِ اخْرُجُواْ مِن دِيَارِكُم ...

66. If We had ordered them to sacrifice their lives or to leave their homes,

... مَّا فَعَلُوهُ إِلاَّ قَلِيلٌ مِّنْهُمْ...

very few of them would have done it:

C584. The highest in faith willingly sacrifice their lives, their homes. and all that they hold dearest, in the cause of Allah.

Those whose faith is not so strong are expected at least to do what a loyal member of any society does, submit his doubts and disputes to the head of the society and cheerfully accept his decision and submit to it,

The contrast is between the Hypocrites who will not even do this, and the really devoted men and women who would voluntarily sacrifice their lives.

... وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُواْ مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيتًا (٦٦)

but if they had done what they were (actually) told, it would have been best for them, and would have gone farthest to strengthen their (faith).

وَإِذاً لَّآتَيْنَاهُم مِّن لَّدُنَّـا أَجْراً عَظِيمًا (٦٧)

67. And We should then have given them from Our Presence a great reward.

وَلَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا (٦٨)

68. And We should have shown them the Straight Way.

C585. Four advantages of obedience to Allah are mentioned, in the order in which they will appeal to the beginner in faith:

1. his own benefit ("best for them"):
2. strengthening of his faith, as he becomes more and more at home in the world of faith:
3. reward from Allah's own Presence, such intense conviction that no further arguments are needed:
4. the Straight Way, in which there is no doubt or difficulty whatever in our practical conduct.

وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَـٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم ...

69. All who obey Allah and the Messenger are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,

... مِّنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ ...

of the Prophets (who teach), the sincere (lovers of truth), the witnesses (who testify), and the righteous (who do good):

... وَحَسُنَ أُولَـٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا (٦٩)

ah! what a beautiful fellowship!

C586. A passage of the deepest devotional meaning. Even the humblest man who accepts Faith and does good becomes an accepted member of a great and beautiful company in the Hereafter. It is a company which lives perpetually in the sunshine of Allah's Grace. (This passage partly illustrates 1:5).

It is a glorious hierarchy, of which four grades are specified:

1. The highest is that of the Prophets or Apostles, who get plenary inspiration from Allah, and who teach mankind by example and precept. That rank in Islam is held by Muhammad Al-Mustafa.

2. The next are those whose badge is sincerity and truth: they love and support the truth with their person, their means, their influence, and all that is theirs.

   That rank was held by the special Companions of Muhammad, among whom the type was that of Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq.

3. The next are the noble army of Witnesses, who testify to the truth.

   The testimony may be by martyrdom, Or

   it may be by the tongue of the true Preacher or

   the pen of the devoted scholar, or

   the life of the man devoted to service,

4. Lastly, there is the large company of Righteous people, the ordinary folk who do their ordinary business, but always in a righteous Way. They are the rank and file of the beautiful Fellowship, in which each has his place and yet all feel that they derive glory from the common association. (R).

ذٰلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ عَلِيمًا (٧٠)

71. O ye who believe! take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together.

C587. If a generous General gives the private soldier the privilege of sitting with his comrades and officers, high and low, in one common Brotherhood, people may perhaps wonder: how may this be?

If we are admitted to that Company, we want to know no more. It is enough to us that Allah knows our humility and our unworthiness, and with His full knowledge admits us to that glorious Fellowship!

C.64 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:71-91)

Keep together in your noble Brotherhood;
Share its joys and sorrows; strive
And fight the good fight and never fear;
For this life is short, and the Hereafter
Eternal. Allow not yourselves to be drawn
Into unbelief and cowardice;
Maintain the Right, Protect yourselves
Against Hypocrites as Deserters,
But pursue them not unrelentingly.

Section 10

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ خُذُواْ حِذْرَكُمْ فَانفِرُواْ ثُبَاتٍ أَوِ انفِرُواْ جَمِيعًا (٧١)

71. O ye who believe! take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together.

C588. No fight should be undertaken without due preparations and precautions. When these are taken, we must go boldly forward.

"Go forth" is therefore repeated for emphasis. But we must go forth in a collective spirit, and not in a selfish spirit-either in small parties or all together, as our Leader determines.

We must not tarry like the doubter in the next two verses.

وَإِنَّ مِنكُمْ لَمَن لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ ...

72. There are certainly among you men who would tarry behind:

C589. The doubter detaches himself in thought and action from the community. If the general body has a reverse, he blesses Allah that he was not among them, instead of being ashamed of himself for desertion.

If the general body wins a success, he does not rejoice for the common cause, but only regrets for himself that he was not there to share in the glory and the gains!

... فَإِنْ أَصَابَتْكُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالَ...

if a misfortune befalls you. They say:

... قَدْ أَنْعَمَ اللّهُ عَلَيَّ إِذْ لَمْ أَكُن مَّعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا (٧٢)

"Allah did favor us in that we were not present among them."

وَلَئِنْ أَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللهِ لَيَقُولَنَّ كَأَن لَّمْ تَكُن بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ مَوَدَّةٌ...

73. But if good fortune comes to you from Allah, they would be sure to say, as if there had never been ties of affection between you and them,

... يَا لَيتَنِي كُنتُ مَعَهُمْ فَأَفُوزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا (٧٣)

"Oh! I wish I had been with them; a fine thing should I then have made of it!"

C590. Just a selfish man's thought. Such men are far from being a source of strength to their community.

They are no use in a fight, and the next verse by implication discards them.

فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالآخِرَةِ ...

74. Let those fight in the Cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter,

C591. It is not every one, -least of all, poltroons and faint-hearted persons- who is fit to fight in the cause of Allah.

To do so is a privilege, and those who understand the privilege are prepared to sacrifice all their interests in this life, and this life itself; for they know that it is the sacrifice of something fleeting and of little value, for the sake of something everlasting, and of immense value. Whether (in appearance) they win or lose, in reality they win the prize for which they are fighting, -viz., honour and glory in the sight of Allah.

Note that the only alternatives here are Death or Victory! The true fighter knows no defeat.

... وَمَن يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَو يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٧٤)

to him who fighteth in the Cause of Allah, whether he is slain or gets victory, soon shall We give him a reward of great (value).

وَمَا لَكُمْ لاَ تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ ...

75. And why should ye not fight in the Cause of Allah

... وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاء وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ ...

and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children whose cry is:

C592. Mustadh'af: one reckoned weak, and therefore iii-treated and oppressed.

Cf. 4:98, and 7:150.

... رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَـٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا...

"Our Lord! rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors;

... وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا...

and raise for us from Thee one who will protect;

... وَاجْعَل لَّنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ نَصِيرًا (٧٥)

and raise for us from Thee one who will help!"

C593. Even from the human point of view the cause of Allah is the cause of justice, the cause of the oppressed.

In the great persecution, before Makkah was won again, what sorrows, threats, tortures, and oppressions, were suffered by those whose faith was unshaken?

Muhammad's life and that of his adherents was threatened: they were mocked, assaulted, insulted and beaten; those within the power of the enemy were put into chains and cast into prison; others were boycotted, and shut out of trade, business, and social intercourse; they could not even buy the food they wanted, or perform their religious duties.

The persecution was redoubled for the believing slaves, women, and children after the Hijrah. Their cry for a protector, and helper from Allah was answered when Muhammad the Chosen One brought freedom and peace to Makkah again.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

76. Those who believe fight in the Cause of Allah,

... وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءِ الشَّيْطَانِ...

and those who reject faith fight in the cause of evil: so fight ye against the friends of Satan:

C594. Auliya plural of *wali*, friend, supporter, protector, patron;

from the same root as *maula*, for which see 4:33, n. 543.

... إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (٧٦)

feeble indeed is the cunning of Satan.

Section 11

... أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ

77. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who were told to hold back their hands (form fight)

C595. Before the command for fighting was issued there were some who were impatient, and could scarcely be held back. They wanted fighting from human motives,- pugnacity, hatred against their enemies, the gaining of personal ends. Fighting from such motives is wrong at all times.

When the testing time came, and they had to fight, not for their own hand, but for a Sacred Cause, in which there was much suffering and little personal gain, the Hypocrites held back and were afraid.

... وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ...

but establish regular prayers and spend in regular charity?

... فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً...

When (at length) the order for fighting was issued to them, behold! a section of them feared men as, or even more than, they should have feared Allah:

... وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ...

they say: "Our Lord! why hast Thou ordered us to fight?

... لَوْلا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ ...

Wouldst Thou not grant us respite to our (natural) term, near (enough)?"

C596. "Our natural term of life," they would say, "is short enough; why should we jeopardize it by fighting in which there is no personal gain?"

The answer is begun in this verse and continued in the next. Briefly, the answer is:

1. in any case the pleasures of this world are short; this life is fleeting; the first thing for a righteous man to do is to emancipate himself from its obsessions;
2. to do your duty is to do right; therefore turn your attention mainly to duty;
3. when duty calls for self-sacrifice, be sure that Allah's call is never unjust, and never such as to exceed your capacity; and
4. if you fear death, you will not by fear escape death; it will find you out wherever you are; why not face it boldly when duty calls?

... قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ ...

Say: "Short is the enjoyment of this world:

... وَالآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَى وَلاَ تُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلاً (٧٧)

the Hereafter is the best for those who do right: never will ye be dealt with unjustly in the very least!

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُواْ يُدْرِككُّمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ...

78. "Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!"

... وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُواْ هَـذِهِ مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ...

If some good befalls them, they say, "This is from Allah;"

... وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُواْ هَـذِهِ مِنْ عِندِكَ...

but if evil, they say, "This is from thee"

... قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ اللّهِ...

(O Prophet). "Say: "All things are from Allah.

C597. The Hypocrites were inconsistent, and in this reflect unregenerate mankind.

If a disaster happens, due to their own folly, they blame somebody else; but if they are fortunate, they claim reflected credit by pretending that Heaven has favoured them because of their own superior merits.

The modern critic discards even this pretence, eliminates Heaven altogether, and claims all credit direct to himself, unless he brings in blind Chance, but that he does mostly to "explain" misfortune.

If we look to the ultimate Cause of all things, all things come from Allah. But if we look to the proximate cause of things, our own merit is so small, that we can hardly claim credit for good ourselves with any fairness.

In Allah's hand is all good: 3:26. On the other hand, the proximate cause of our evil is due to some wrong in our own inner selves; for never are we dealt with unjustly in the very least: 4:77.

... فَمَا لِهَـؤُلاء الْقَوْمِ لاَ يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا (٧٨)

But what hath come to these people, that they fail to understand a single fact?

مَّا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِن سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِن نَّفْسِكَ...

79. Whatever good, (O man!) happens to thee, is from Allah; but whatever evil happens to thee, is from thy (own) soul.

... وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولاً ...

And We have sent thee as a Messenger to (instruct) mankind:

C598. To blame a man of God for our misfortunes is doubly unjust. For he comes to save us from misfortune, and it is because we flout him or pay no heed to him, that our own rebellion, brings its own punishment.

If we realise this truth we shall be saved from two sins:

1. the sin of injustice to Allah's Messengers, who come for our good, and not for our harm:
2. the sin of not realising our own shortcomings or rebellion, and thus living in spiritual darkness.

If the Message is from Allah, that carries its own authority:

"enough is Allah for a witness."

... وَكَفَى بِاللّهِ شَهِيدًا (٧٩)

and enough is Allah for a witness.

... مَّنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللّهَ

80. He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah:

... وَمَن تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا (٨٠)

but if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds).

C599. The Messenger was sent to preach, guide, instruct, and show the Way, -not to drive people to good. That is not Allah's Plan, which trains the human Will.

The Messenger's duty is therefore to convey the Message of Allah, in all the ways of persuasion that are open to him.

If men perversely disobey that Message, they are not disobeying him but they are disobeying Allah. In the same way those who obey the Message are obeying Allah. They are not obliging the Messenger: they arc merely doing their duty.

...وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَزُواْ مِنْ عِندِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي تَقُولُ

81. They have "Obedience" on their lips; but when they leave thee, a section of them meditate all night on things very different from what thou tellest them,

...وَاللّهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُونَ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّهِ...

but Allah records their nightly (plots): so keep clear of them, and put thy trust in Allah;

... وَكَفَى بِاللّهِ وَكِيلاً (٨١)

and enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

C600. If we trust people who are not true, they are more likely to hinder than to help. But Allah is All-good as well as All-powerful, and all our affairs are best entrusted to His care. He is the best Guardian of all interests.

Therefore we should not trust the lip professions of Hypocrites, but trust in Allah. Nor should our confidence in Allah be shaken by any secret plots that enemies hatch against us. We should take all human precautions against them, but having done so, we should put our trust in Allah, Who knows the inner working of events better than any human mind can conceive.

... أَفَلاَ يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ

82. Do they not consider the Qur'án (with care)?

... وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ غَيْرِ اللّهِ لَوَجَدُواْ فِيهِ اخْتِلاَفًا كَثِيرًا (٨٢)

Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.

C601. The unity of the Quran is admittedly greater than that of any other sacred book. And yet how can we account for it except through the unity of Allah's purpose and design?

From a mere human point of view, we should have expected much discrepancy, because

- the Messenger who promulgated it was not a learned man or philosopher,
- it was promulgated at various times and in various circumstances, and
- it is addressed to all grades of mankind.

Yet, when properly understood, its various pieces fit together well even when arranged without any regard to chronological order. There was just the One Inspirer and the One Inspired.

وَإِذَا جَاءهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الأَمْنِ أوِ الْخَوْفِ أذَاعُواْ بِهِ...

83. When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they divulge it.

... وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُوْلِي الأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ...

If they had only referred it to the Messenger, or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have tested it from them (direct).

... وَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لاَتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (٨٣)

Were it not for the Grace and Mercy of Allah unto you, all but a few of you would have fallen into the clutches of Satan.

C602. In times of war or public panic, thoughtless repetition of gossip is rightly restrained by all effective States. If false, such news may cause needless alarm: if true, it may frighten the, timid and cause some misgiving even to the bravest, because the counterpart of it -the preparations made to meet the danger- is not known.

Thoughtless news, true or false, may also encourage the enemy. The proper course is quietly to hand all news direct to those who are in a position to investigate it. They can then sift it and take suitable measures to checkmate the enemy.

Not to do so, but to deal with news either thoughtlessly or maliciously is to fall directly into the snares of evil.

فَقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ لاَ تُكَلَّفُ إِلاَّ نَفْسَكَ وَحَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

84. Then fight in Allah's cause -- thou art held responsible only for thyself, and rouse the believers.

... عَسَى اللّهُ أن يَكُفَّ بَأْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ...

It may be that Allah will restrain the fury of the unbelievers:

... وَاللّهُ أَشَدُّ بَأْسًا وَأَشَدُّ تَنكِيلاً (٨٤)

for Allah is the strongest in might and in punishment.

C603. The courage of Muhammad was as notable as his wisdom, his gentleness, and his trust in Allah. Facing fearful odds, he often stood alone, and took the whole responsibility on himself. But his example and visible trust in Allah inspired and roused the Muslims, and also - speaking purely from a human point of view- restrained the fury of his enemies.

When we consider that he was Allah's inspired Messenger to carry out His Plan, we can see that nothing can resist that Plan. If the enemy happens to have strength, power, or resources, Allah's strength, power, and resources are infinitely greater. If the enemy is meditating punishment on the righteous for their righteousness. Allah's punishment for such wickedness will be infinitely greater and more effective.

مَّن يَشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَكُن لَّهُ نَصِيبٌ مِّنْهَا...

85. Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein:

... وَمَن يَشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَكُن لَّهُ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا...

and whoever recommends and helps an evil cause, shares in its burden:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقِيتًا (٨٥)

and Allah hath power over all things.

C604. In this fleeting world's chances Allah's providence and justice may not always appear plain to our eyes. But we are asked to believe that if we help and support a good cause, we share in all its credit and in its eventual victory. And conversely, we cannot support a bad cause without sharing in all its evil consequences.

If appearances seem against this faith, let us not be deceived by appearances. For Allah has power over all things.

وَإِذَا حُيِّيْتُم بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّواْ بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا...

86. When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, (at least) of equal courtesy.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا (٨٦)

Allah takes careful account of all things.

C605. The necessary correlative to the command to fight in a good cause is the command to cultivate sweetness and cordiality in our manners at all times. For fighting is an exceptional necessity while the sweetness of daily human intercourse is a normal need.

Further, we give kindness and courtesy without asking, and return it if possible in even better terms than we received, or at least in equally courteous terms. For we are all creatures of One God, and shall be brought together before Him.

اللّهُ لا إِلـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ ...

87. Allah! there is no god but He:

... لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

of a surety He will gather you together against the Day of Judgment, about which there is no doubt.

... وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللّهِ حَدِيثًا (٨٧)

And whose word can be truer than Allah's?

Section 12

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِئَتَيْنِ ...

88. Why should ye be divided into two parties about the hypocrites?

C606. When the desertion of the Hypocrites at Uhud nearly caused a disaster to the Muslim cause there was great feeling among the Muslims of Madinah against them. One party wanted to put them to the sword: another to leave them alone.

The actual policy pursued avoided both extremes, and was determined by these verses. It was clear that they were a danger to the Muslim community if they were admitted into its counsels, and in any case they were a source of demoralization.

But while every caution was used, no extreme measures were taken against them. On the contrary, they were given a chance of making good. If they made a sacrifice for the cause ("flee from what is forbidden," see next verse), their conduct purged their previous cowardice, and their sincerity entitled them to be taken back.

But if they deserted the Muslim community again, they were treated as enemies, with the additional penalty of desertion which is enforced by all nations actually at war. Even so, a humane exception was made in the two cases specified in 4:90.

... وَاللّهُ أَرْكَسَهُم بِمَا كَسَبُواْ...

Allah hath upset them for their (evil) deeds.

... أَتُرِيدُونَ أَن تَهْدُواْ مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللّهُ...

Would ye guide those whom Allah hath thrown out of the way?

... وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلاً (٨٨)

For those whom Allah hath thrown out of the way, never shalt thou find the way.

وَدُّواْ لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ كَمَا كَفَرُواْ فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاء...

89. They but wish that ye should reject faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing (as they):

... فَلاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ مِنْهُمْ أَوْلِيَاء حَتَّىَ يُهَاجِرُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

but take not friends from their ranks until they flee in the way of Allah (from what is forbidden).

C607. Flee: the verbal form which the noun Hijrah is derived. Bukhari interprets this rightly as fleeing from all that is forbidden. This would include Hijrah in the technical sense of leaving a place in which the practice of religion is not allowed.

But it is more general. In time of war, if a man is willing to submit to discipline and refrain from infringing orders issued, he has proved his fidelity and may be treated as a member of the community at war.

On the other hand if he by false pretences comes into the inner counsels merely to betray them, he may rightly be treated as a traitor or deserter and be punished for his treason or desertion; or

if he escapes, he can be treated as an enemy and is entitled to no mercy. He is worse than an enemy: he has claimed to be of you in order to spy on you, and been all the time helping the enemy.

... فَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَخُذُوهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدتَّمُوهُمْ...

But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them?

... وَلاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَلاَ نَصِيرًا (٨٩)

and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks.

إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ إِلَىَ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ...

90. Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace),

C608. Except: the exception refers to "seize them and slay them", the death penalty for repeated desertion.

Even after such desertion, exemption is granted in two cases.

- One is where the deserter took asylum with a tribe with whom there was a treaty of peace and amity.

  Presumably such a tribe (even though outside the pale of Islam) might be trusted to keep the man from fighting against the forces of Islam -in the modern phrase, to disarm him and render him harmless.

- The second case for exemption is where the man from his own heart desires never to take up arms against Islam, though he does not wish to join the forces of Islam, to fight against a hostile tribe (perhaps his own) fighting against Islam.

  But he must make a real approach, giving guarantees of his sincerity. In the modern phrase he would be "on parole".

But this provision is much milder than that in modern military codes, which grant the privilege only to enemy prisoners, not to those who have deserted from the army granting them parole.

The Hypocrites were in that position, but humanity as well as policy treated them with great leniency.

... أَوْ جَآؤُوكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَن يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ أَوْ يُقَاتِلُواْ قَوْمَهُمْ...

or those who approach you with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people.

C609. Approach or come: refers not to the physical act coming, but to the mental attitude; the heart is mentioned for sincerity.

When they sincerely promise not to fight against you, do not pursue them. remember that if they had fought against you, your difficulties would have been increased. their neutrality itself may be a great advantage to you.

So long as you are satisfied that they are sincere and their acts support their declarations of peace with you, you should not consider yourself justified in pursuing them and warning against them.

... وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقَاتَلُوكُمْ...

If Allah had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you:

... فَإِنِ اعْتَزَلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ وَأَلْقَوْاْ إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلاً (٩٠)

therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then Allah hath opened no way for you (to war against them).

سَتَجِدُونَ آخَرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَأْمَنُوكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُواْ قَوْمَهُمْ ...

91. Others you will find that wish to gain your confidence as well as that of their people:

كُلَّ مَا رُدُّوَاْ إِلَى الْفِتْنِةِ أُرْكِسُواْ فِيهَا...

every time they are sent back to temptation, they succumb thereto:

C610. As opposed to the two classes of deserters to whom clemency may be shown, there is a class which is treacherous and dangerous and cannot be left alone.

They try to win your confidence, and are all the time in the confidence of the enemy. Every time they get a chance, they succumb to the temptation of double-dealing. The best way of dealing with them is to treat them as open enemies. Keep them not in your midst.

If they give you guarantees of peace and do not actually fight against you, well and good. If not, they are deserters actively fighting in the ranks of the enemy. They have openly given you proof, and you can fairly seize and slay them in war as deserters and enemies.

... فَإِن لَّمْ يَعْتَزِلُوكُمْ وَيُلْقُوا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَخُذُوهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ...

if they withdraw not from you nor give you (guarantees) of peace besides restraining their hands, seize them and slay them. Wherever ye get them:

... وَأُولَٰئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا (٩١)

in their case We have provided you with a clear argument against them.

C.65 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:92-104)

The lives of those who believe

Are sacred; if one is slain

By mistake, full compensation

Should be made. Nor should

A stranger, even in time of war,

Be treated as an enemy, without

The fullest investigation. Live not

In places hostile to Islam,

If ye are able to migrate-
And spacious is Allah's earth.
Devotion and prayer may be
Shortened in times of danger.
Take every precaution for safety,
But be bold and undaunted in fight.

Section 13

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَن يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلاَّ خَطَئًا...

92. Never should a believer kill a believer; but (if it so happens) by mistake, (compensation is due):

C611. Life is absolutely sacred in the Islamic Brotherhood. But mistakes will sometimes happen, as did happen in the melee at Uhud, when some Muslims were killed (being mistaken for the enemy) by Muslims. There was no guilty intention: therefore there was no murder. But all the same, the family of the deceased was entitled to compensation unless they freely remitted it, and in addition it was provided that the unfortunate man who made the mistake should free a believing slave.

Thus a deplorable mistake was made the occasion for winning the liberty of a slave who was a Believer, for Islam discountenances slavery.

The compensation could only be paid if the deceased belonged to a Muslim society or to some people at peace with the Muslim society.

Obviously it could not be paid if, though the deceased was a Believer, his people were at war with the Muslim society: even if his people could be reached, it is not fair to increase the resources of the enemy.

- If the deceased was himself an enemy at war, obviously the laws of war justify his being killed in warfare unless he surrendered.

- If the man who took life unintentionally has no means from which to free a believing slave or to give compensation, he must still by an act of strict self-denial (fasting for two whole months running) show that he is cognizant of the grave nature of the deed he has done and sincerely repentant.

I take this to apply to all three cases mentioned: that is, where a Believer killed a Believer unintentionally and the deceased

1. belonged to the same community as you, or
2. belonged to a community at war with you, or
3. belonged to a community in alliance with you.

... وَمَن قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَئًا فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ...

if one (so) kills a believer, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave,

... وَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ إِلاَّ أَن يَصَّدَّقُواْ...

and pay compensation to the deceased's family, unless they remit it freely.

... فَإِن كَانَ مِن قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ...

If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you, and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (is enough).

... وَإِن كَانَ مِن قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ...

If he belonged to a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave be freed.

... فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّهِ...

For those who find this beyond their means, (is prescribed) a fast for two months running: by way of repentance to Allah:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٩٢)

for Allah hath all knowledge and all wisdom.

وَمَن يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا...

93. If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (for ever):

C612. What is mentioned here is the punishment in the Hereafter.

The legal consequences, enforceable by human society, are mentioned in 2:178, under the rules of Qisas.

That is, a life should be taken for a life destroyed, but this should be on a scale of equality: a single murder should not commit a whole tribe to a perpetual blood-feud, as in the days of ignorance. But if the heirs of the man slain accept reasonable compensation, this should be accepted, and the taking of a life for a life should be put a stop to. This course leads to the saving of life, and is commanded to men of understanding.

... وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا (٩٣)

and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him,

and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا ...

94. O ye who believe! when ye go abroad in the Cause of Allah, investigate carefully,

C613. Go abroad: dharaba: to travel, to go for jihad, or for honest trade or other service, which if done with pure motives, counts as service in the cause of Allah.

The immediate occasion was in connection with jihad, but the words are general, and can be applied to similar circumstances.

In war (or in peace) we are apt to catch some worldly advantage by pluming ourselves on our superiority in Faith. In war perhaps we want to gain glory or booty by killing a supposed enemy. This is wrong.

The righteous man, if he is really out in Allah's service, has more abundant and richer gifts to think of in the spiritual world.

... وَلاَ تَقُولُواْ لِمَنْ أَلْقَى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلاَمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا...

and say not to anyone who offers you a salutation: "Thou art none of a believer!"

... تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِندَ اللّهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ...

Coveting the perishable goods of this life: with Allah are profits and spoils abundant.

... كَذَلِكَ كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُواْ...

Even thus were ye yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favors: therefore carefully investigate,

... إِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (٩٤)

for Allah is well aware of all that ye do.

... لاَّ يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُوْلِي الضَّرَرِ ...

95. Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt,

... وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ...

and those who strive and fight in the Cause of Allah with their goods and their persons.

... فَضَّلَ اللّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً...

Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home):

... وَكُلاًّ وَعَدَ اللّهُ الْحُسْنَى ...

unto all (in faith) hath Allah promised good:

C614. Allah's goodness is promised to all people of Faith. But there are degrees among men and women of Faith.

- There are people with natural inertia: they do the minimum that is required of them, but no more.
- There are people who are weak in will: they are easily frightened.

- There are people who are so strong in will and so firm in faith that they are determined to conquer every obstacle, whether in their own physical or other infirmities or in the external world around them.

In a time of jihad, when people give their all, and even their lives, for the common cause, they must be accounted more glorious than those who sit at home, even though they have good will to the cause and carry out minor duties in aid.

The special reward of such self-sacrifice is special forgiveness and mercy, as proceeding from the direct approbation and love of Allah.

... وَفَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٩٥)

but those who strive and fight hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward.

...دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً

96. Ranks specially bestowed by Him, and Forgiveness and Mercy.

... وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٩٦)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 14

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَآئِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنتُمْ

97. When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say:

"In what (plight) were ye?"

C615. The immediate occasion for this passage was the question of migration (Hijrah) from places where Islam was being persecuted and suppressed.

Obviously the duty of Muslims was to leave such places, even if it involved forsaking their homes, and join and strengthen the Muslim community among whom they

could live in peace and with whom they could help in fighting the evils around them.

But the meaning is wider.

Islam does not say: "Resist not evil." On the contrary it requires a constant, unceasing struggle against evil. For such struggle it may be necessary to forsake home and unite and organize and join our brethren in assaulting and overthrowing the fortress of evil.

For the Muslim's duty is not only to enjoin good but to prohibit evil.

To make our assault we must be prepared to put ourselves in a position from which such assault would be possible, and Allah's earth is spacious enough for the purpose.

"Position" includes not only local position, but moral and material position. For example, we must shun evil company where we cannot put it down, but organize a position from which we can put it down.

... قَالُواْ كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الأَرْضِ...

They reply: "Weak and oppressed were we in the earth."

... قَالُوَاْ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُواْ فِيهَا...

They say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evil)?"

... فَأُوْلَـئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءتْ مَصِيرًا (٩٧)

Such men will find their abode in Hell, what an evil refuge!

إِلاَّ الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاء وَالْوِلْدَانِ لاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلاً (٩٨)

98. Except those who are (really) weak and oppressed, men, women, and children who have no means in their power, nor (a guide-post) to direct their way.

C616. If through physical, mental, or moral incapacity, we are unable to fight the good fight, we must nevertheless guard ourselves from it.

Allah's gracious Mercy will recognise and forgive our weakness if it is real weakness, and not merely an excuse. (R).

فَأُوْلَـئِكَ عَسَى اللّهُ أَن يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ ...

99. For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا (٩٩)

for Allah doth blot out (sins) and forgive again and again.

وَمَن يُهَاجِرْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُرَاغَمًا كَثِيرًا وَسَعَةً...

100. He who forsakes his home in the Cause of Allah, finds in the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious:

... وَمَن يَخْرُجْ مِن بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللّهِ...

should he die as a refugee from home for Allah and His Messenger, his reward becomes due and sure with Allah:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (١٠٠)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 15

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَن تَقْصُرُواْ مِنَ الصَّلاَةِ...

101. When ye travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers,

C617. This Verse gives permission to shorten congregational prayers when people are on a journey: verses 102-104 deal with cases when they are in danger at war, in face of the enemy.

The shortening of prayers in both cases is further governed as to details by the practice of the Messenger and his Companions.

As to journeys, two questions arise:

1. what constitutes a journey for this purpose?

2. is the fear of an attack an essential condition for the shortening of the prayers?

As to 1, it is best to leave the matter to discretion, having regard to all the circumstances of the journey, as in the case of the journeys which excuse a fast: see 2:184, n. 190.

The text leaves it to discretion.

As to 2, the practice of the Prophet shows that danger is not an essential condition; it is merely mentioned as a possible incident. The Messenger usually shortened the prayers from four Rak'ahs to two Rak'ahs in Zuhr (midday prayer), 'Asr (afternoon prayer) and Ishaa (night prayer): the other two are in any case short,

Fajr (morning prayer) having two Rak'ahs and Maghrib (evening prayer) having three. (R).

... إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَن يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

for fear the unbelievers may attack you:

... إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا (١٠١)

for the unbelievers are unto you open enemies.

وَإِذَا كُنتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُم مَّعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ...

102. When thou (O Messenger) art with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, taking their arms with them:

... فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِن وَرَآئِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَآئِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا...

when they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear, and let the other party come up, which hath not yet prayed,

... فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ...

and let them pray with thee, taking all precautions, and bearing arms:

... وَدَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُم مَّيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً...

the unbelievers wish, if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush,

C618. The congregational prayer in danger in face of the enemy rests on the principle that the congregation should be divided into two parties;

- one party prays while the other watches the enemy, and
- then the second party comes up to prayers while the first falls back to face the enemy;

  either party does only one or two Rak'ahs, or about half the congregational prayer;

every precaution is taken to prevent a rush by the enemy; even while at prayers armour and arms need not be put off except when rain is likely to cause inconvenience to the wearer and damage to the arms, or when illness or fatigue causes the wearer's strength to fail.

Details can be varied according to circumstances, as was actually done by the Prophet at different times.

... وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِن كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذًى مِّن مَّطَرٍ أَوْ كُنتُم مَّرْضَى أَن تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ...

but there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill;

... وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ...

but take (every) precaution for yourselves.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا (١٠٢)

For the unbelievers Allah hath prepared a humiliating punishment.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ ...

103. When ye pass (congregational) prayers,

C619. Two interpretations are possible:

1. "when ye have finished congregational prayers", or
2. "when (on account of extreme danger) ye have to pass over congregational prayers altogether-even the the shorter form indicated for times of danger."

I prefer the latter, as it accords better with the following sentences, which allows you to remember Allah individually in any posture possible during the danger. But when the danger is past, the full prayers should be offered at the stated times.

... فَاذْكُرُواْ اللّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِكُمْ...

celebrate Allah's praises, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides;

... فَإِذَا اطْمَأْنَنتُمْ فَأَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ...

but when ye are free from danger, set up regular prayers:

... إِنَّ الصَّلاَةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا (١٠٣)

for such prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times.

... وَلاَ تَهِنُواْ فِي ابْتِغَاء الْقَوْمِ

104. And slacken not in following up the enemy:

... إِن تَكُونُواْ تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمونَ ...

if ye are suffering hardships, they are suffering similar hardships;

... وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللّهِ مَا لاَ يَرْجُونَ ...

but ye have hope from Allah, while they have none.

C620. Religion should be a source of strength and not of weakness in all our affairs.

If we have to struggle hard and suffer hardships, those without faith have to do the same, with this difference, that the man of Faith is full of hope in Allah, whereas the man without Faith has nothing to sustain him.

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١٠٤)

And Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

C.66 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:105-126)

Beware of treachery, that would use
The good and pious for its wicked
Ends; its plots will but recoil
On its own head. The righteous
Have no cause for secrecy, except
In doing good. 'Tis evil that
Misleads, deceives, and even dares
Deface fair Nature, as by Allah
Created. Shun all evil, and be firm
In righteousness and faith in Allah.

Section 16

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ ...

105. We have sent down to thee the Book in truth, that thou mightest judge between men, as guided by Allah:

... وَلَا تَكُن لِّلْخَآئِنِينَ خَصِيمًا (١٠٥)

so be not (used) as an advocate by those who betray their trust.

C621. The Commentators explain this passage with reference to the case of Taima ibn Ubairaq, who was nominally a Muslim but really a Hypocrite, and given to all sorts of wicked deeds.

He was suspected of having stolen a set of armour, and when the trial was hot, he planted the stolen property into the house of a Jew, where it was found. The Jew denied the charge and accused Taima, but the sympathies of the Muslim community were with Taima on account of his nominal profession of Islam.

The case was brought to the Prophet, who acquitted the Jew according to the strict principle of justice, as "guided by Allah."

Attempts were made to prejudice him and deceive him into using his authority to favour Taima. When Taima realized that his punishment was imminent he fled and turned apostate. (R).

The general lesson is that the righteous man is faced with all sorts of subtle wiles; the wicked will try to appeal to his highest sympathies and most honourable motives to deceive him and use him as an instrument for defeating justice. He should be careful and cautious, and seek the help of Allah for protection against deception and for firmness in dealing the strictest justice without fear or favour.

To do otherwise is to betray a sacred trust; the trustee must defeat all attempts made to mislead him.

وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (١٠٦)

106. But seek the forgiveness of Allah; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَلاَ تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ...

107. Contend not on behalf of such as betray their own souls:

C622. Own souls are a sort of trust with us. We have to guard them against all temptation. Those who surrender to crime or evil, betray that trust.

We are warned against being deceived into taking their part, induced either by plausible appearances, or by such incentives to partiality as that they belong to our own people or that some link connects them with us, whereas when we are out to do justice, we must not allow any irrelevant considerations to sway us.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا (١٠٧)

for Allah loveth not one given to perfidy and crime.

يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلاَ يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللّهِ...

108. They may hide (their crimes) from men, but they cannot hide (them) from Allah,

... وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّتُونَ مَا لاَ يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ...

seeing that He is in their midst when they plot by night, in words that He cannot approve:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا (١٠٨)

and Allah doth compass round all that they do.

C623. The plots of sinners are known fully to Allah, and He can fully circumvent them if necessary, according to the fullness of His wisdom.

The word used is: **Compass them round.- Muhit:** not only does Allah know all about it, but He is all round it: if in His wisdom He allows it, it is not because He has not complete control over it, but because, having it as it were enclosed in a complete circle. He can use it to further His own Plan. Even out of evil He can bring good.

هَاأَنتُمْ هَـؤُلاء جَادَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

109. Ah! these are the sort of men on whose behalf ye may contend in this world;

... فَمَن يُجَادِلُ اللّهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَم مَّن يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلاً (١٠٩)

but who will contend with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Judgment, or who will carry their affairs through?

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّهَ يَجِدِ اللّهَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (١١٠)

110. If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul, but afterwards seeks Allah's forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَمَن يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ...

111. And if anyone earns sin, he earns it against his own soul:

C624. Kasaba: to earn, to gain, to work for something valuable, to lay up a provision for the future life.

We do a day's labour to earn our livelihood: so in a spiritual sense, whatever good or evil we do in this life, earns us good or evil in the life to come.

In verses 110-112 three cases are considered:

1. if we do ill and repent, Allah will forgive;
2. if we do ill and do not repent: thinking that we can hide it, we are wrong; nothing is hidden from Allah, and we shall suffer the full consequences in the life to come, for we can never evade our personal responsibility:
3. if we do ill, great or small, and impute it to another, our original responsibility for the ill remains, but we add to it something else; for we tie round our necks the guilt of falsehood, which converts even our minor fault into a great sin, and in any case brands us even in this life with shame and ignominy.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١١١)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَمَن يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا (١١٢)

112. But if anyone earns a fault or a sin and throws it on to one that is innocent, He carries (on himself) (both) a falsehood and a flagrant sin.

Section 17

وَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُضِلُّوكَ...

113. But for the Grace of Allah to thee and His Mercy, a party of them would certainly have plotted to lead thee astray.

... وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلاَّ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّونَكَ مِن شَيْءٍ...

But (in fact) they will only lead their own souls astray,

and to thee they can do no harm in the least.

... وَأَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ...

For Allah hath sent down to thee the Book and wisdom and taught thee what thou knewest not (before);

... وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا (١١٣)

and great is the grace of Allah unto thee.

لاَّ خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ ...

114. In most of their secret talks there is no good:

... إِلاَّ مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلاَحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ...

but if one exhorts to a deed of charity or justice or conciliation between men, (secrecy is permissible):

C625. Usually secrecy is for evil ends, or from questionable motives, or because the person seeking secrecy is ashamed of himself and knows that if his acts or motives became known, he would make himself odious.

Islam therefore disapproves of secrecy, and loves and enjoins openness in all consultations and doings. But there are three things in which secrecy is permissible, and indeed laudable, provided the motive be purely unselfish, to earn "the good pleasure of Allah":

1. if you are doing a deed of charity or beneficence, whether in giving material things or in helping in moral, intellectual, or spiritual matters; here publicity may not be agreeable to the recipient of your beneficence, and you have to think of his feelings;
2. where an unpleasant act of justice or correction has to be done; this should be done, but there is no virtue in publishing it abroad and causing humiliation to some parties or adding to their humiliation by publicity;
3. where there is a delicate question of conciliating parties to a quarrel; they may be very touchy about publicity but quite amenable to the influence of a man acting in private.

... وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاء مَرْضَاتِ اللّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (١١٤)

to him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall soon give a reward of the highest (value).

وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

115. If anyone contends with the Messenger even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of faith,

... نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّى وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ....

We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell,

.. وَسَاءتْ مَصِيرًا (١١٥)

what an evil refuge?

Section 18

إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاء...

116. Allah forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other **gods** with Him: but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this:

C626. Cf. 4:48 and n. 569.

Blasphemy in the spiritual kingdom is like treason in the political kingdom.

... وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلاَلاً بَعِيدًا (١١٦)

one who joins other gods with Allah, hath strayed far, far away (from the right).

إِن يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ إِلاَّ إِنَاثًا ...

117. (The pagans), leaving Him, call but upon female deities:

C627. The unity, power, and goodness of Allah are so manifest in nature and in the human mind when it is in accord with the universal spirit, that only the most abject perversion can account for the sin of religious treason.

That sin arises from perverted ideas of sex or perverted ideas of self. The perversion of sex is to suppose that sex rules in religious matters. From it arise such horrible creations of the imagination as Kali, the blood-thirsty goddess of India, or Hecate, the goddess of revenge and hate in Greek mythology.

Even in beautiful forms like Saraswati (the goddess of learning) or Minerva (the virgin goddess of sport and arts), to say nothing of Venus (the goddess of carnal pleasures), the emphasis laid on sex destroys a right view of religious nature.

Perverted ideas of self are typified in the story of Satan, who was so puffed up with arrogance that he disobeyed Allah, and Allah cursed him.

Both these perversions, if allowed lodgment, completely ruin our religious nature and deface Allah's handiwork. Hence it is not merely an outer sin but one that corrupts us through and through.

... وَإِن يَدْعُونَ إِلاَّ شَيْطَانًا مَّرِيدًا (١١٧)

they call but upon Satan the persistent rebel!

...لَّعَنَهُ اللّهُ

118. Allah did curse him,

... وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا (١١٨)

but he said: "I will take of Thy servants a portion marked off.

C628. Satan obtained Allah's permission to tempt man, and this was implied in such free-will as was granted to man by Allah.

Satan's boast is that the portion of mankind seduced by him will be so corrupted in their nature that they will bear a sort of brand that will mark them off as his own; or that they will be like a portion assigned to himself.

... وَلأُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلأُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ

119. "I will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires;

C629. Satan's deceptions are with false desires, false superstitions, and false fears.

... وَلآمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ آذَانَ الأَنْعَامِ ...

I will order them to slit the ears of cattle,

C630. Slitting the ears of cattle is just one instance of the superstitions to which men become slaves when they run after false gods.

Astrology, magic, and vain beliefs in things that do not exist lead men away from Allah, the one true God. (R).

... وَلآمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللّهِ...

and to deface the (fair) nature created by Allah."

C631. To deface the (fair) nature created by Allah; there is both a physical and a spiritual meaning.

We see many kinds of defacements practised on men and animals, against their true nature as created by Allah, partly on account of superstition, partly on account of selfishness.

Spiritually the case is even worse. How many natures are dwarfed or starved and turned from their original instincts by cruel superstitions or customs?

Allah created man pure: Satan defaces the image.

... وَمَن يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِينًا (١١٩)

Whoever, forsaking Allah, takes Satan for a friend, hath of a surety suffered a loss that is manifest.

... يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيهِمْ

120. Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires;

... وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلاَّ غُرُورًا (١٢٠)

but Satan's promises are nothing but deception.

أُوْلَـئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلاَ يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَحِيصًا (١٢١)

121. They (his dupes) will have their dwelling in hell, and from it they will find no way of escape.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ...

122. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall soon admit them to gardens,

... تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

with rivers flowing beneath, to dwell therein for ever.

... وَعْدَ اللّهِ حَقًّا ...

Allah's promise is the truth,

... وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللّهِ قِيلاً (١٢٢)

and whose word can be truer than Allah's?

لَّيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلا أَمَانِيِّ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ...

123. Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail):

C632. Personal responsibility is again and again insisted on as the key-note of Islam. In this are implied faith and right conduct.

Faith is not an external thing: it begins with an act of will, but if true and sincere, it affects the whole being, and leads to right conduct.

In this it is distinguished from the kind of faith which promises salvation because some one else in whom you are asked to believe has borne away the sins of men, or the kind of faith which says that because you are born of a certain race ("Children of Abraham") or a certain caste, you are privileged, and your conduct will be judged by a different standard from that of other men.

Whatever you are, if you do evil, you must suffer the consequences, unless Allah's Mercy comes to your help.

... مَن يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ...

whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly.

... وَلاَ يَجِدْ لَهُ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلاَ نَصِيرًا (١٢٣)

Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتَ مِن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ...

124. If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female, and have faith,

... فَأُوْلَـئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلاَ يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا (١٢٤)

they will enter heaven and not the least injustice will be done to them.

C633. Naqir: the groove in a date-stone, a thing of no value whatever.

Cf. n. 575 to 4:53.

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ للّهِ...

125. Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah,

... وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ واتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا...

does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith?

... وَاتَّخَذَ اللّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلاً (١٢٥)

For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.

C634. Abraham is distinguished in Muslim theology with the title of "Friend of Allah".

This does not of course mean that he was anything more than a mortal. But his faith was pure and true, and his conduct was firm and righteous in all circumstances.

He was the fountainhead of the present monotheistic tradition, the Patriarch of the prophetic line, and is revered alike by Jews, Christians and Muslims. (R).

وَللّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

126. But to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا (١٢٦)

and He it is that encompasseth all things.

C635. Muhit: Cf. 4:108, and n. 623.

C.67 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:127-152)

Justice to women and orphans
Is part of religion and the fear
Of Allah. Stand out firmly
For justice to all, even against
Yourselves or your nearest of kin.
Remain firm in faith, and consort not
With evil or hypocrisy. Be true
In speech, and wound not others;
Nor distinguished between Teachers of Truth,
For Allah's Truth is one and should be believed.

Section 19

وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ...

127. They ask thy instruction concerning the women.

... قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ...

Say: Allah doth instruct you about them:
and (remember) what hath been rehearsed unto you in the Book,

C636. Again and again is it impressed on the community of Islam to be just in their dealings with women, orphans, children, and all whose weakness requires special consideration.

The law about widows and orphans, inheritance, dower, and marriage had already been declared in 4:2-35 and further instructions are now given on a further reference.

It was not right that anyone should take advantage of their helpless position to deprive them of dower or of their portion in inheritance.

... فِي يَتَامَى النِّسَاء اللَّاتِي لاَ تُؤْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَن تَنكِحُوهُنَّ...

concerning the orphans of women to whom ye give not the portions prescribed, and yet whom ye desire to marry,

... وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ وَأَن تَقُومُواْ لِلْيَتَامَى بِالْقِسْطِ ...

as also concerning the children who are weak and oppressed: that ye stand firm for justice to orphans.

C637. Cf. 4:75. n. 592.

Both widows and orphans are to be helped because they are ordinarily weak, ill-treated, and oppressed.

In communities which base their civil rights on brute strength, the weaker go to the wall, and public opinion expects nothing else. In Nietzsche's philosophy of the Superman that doctrine is stressed strongly, and some of the militarist nations in our own time seem inclined to support this reversion to our primitive instincts. Even in modern democracies of the saner sort, we are often told that it is the fate of minorities to suffer; strength of numbers here becomes the passport to power and privilege.

Islam, while upholding sane manly views in general, enjoins the most solicitous care for the weak and oppressed in every way-in rights of property, in social rights, and in the right to opportunities of development.

Spiritual strength or weakness does not necessarily go with physical or numerical strength.

... وَمَا تَفْعَلُواْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا (١٢٧)

There is not a good deed which ye do, but Allah is well-acquainted therewith.

وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِن بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلاَ جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَن يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا...

128. If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves;

... وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الأَنفُسُ الشُّحَّ ...

and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed.

C638. To protect the woman's economic interests, various rules are prescribed for dower in marriage. But the sanctity of marriage itself is greater than any economic interests.

Divorce is, of all things permitted, most hateful to Allah. Therefore if a breach between husband and wife can be prevented by some economic consideration, it is better to make that concession than to imperil the future of the wife, the children, and probably the husband also.

Such concessions are permissible, in view of the love of wealth ingrained in unregenerate man, but a recommendation is made that we should practice self-restraint, and do what we can to come to an amicable settlement without any economic sacrifice on the part of the woman.

... وَإِن تُحْسِنُواْ وَتَتَّقُواْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١٢٨)

But if ye do good and practice self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

وَلَن تَسْتَطِيعُواْ أَن تَعْدِلُواْ بَيْنَ النِّسَاء وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ...

129. Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire:

... فَلاَ تَمِيلُواْ كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ...

but turn not away (from a woman) altogether so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air).

C639. In this material world there are two principle causes of division between man and wife,

- money and
- "the other woman" or "the other man".

Money was dealt with in the last verse. Here is the case of "the other woman". Legally more than one wife (up to four) are permissible on the condition that the man can be fair and just to all.

But this is a condition almost impossible to fulfil. If, in the hope that he might be able to fulfil it, a man puts himself in that impossible position, it is only right to insist that he should not discard one but at least fulfil all the outward duties that are incumbent on him in respect of her.

... وَإِن تُصْلِحُواْ وَتَتَّقُواْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ غَفُوراً رَّحِيمًا (١٢٩)

If ye come to a friendly understanding and practice self-restraint, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَإِن يَتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّهُ كُلاًّ مِّن سَعَتِهِ...

130. But if they disagree (and must part), Allah will provide abundance for all from His all-reaching bounty:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا (١٣٠)

for Allah is He that careth for all and is Wise.

وَلِلّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

131. To Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth.

C640. Notice the refrain: **"To Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth":** repeated three times, each time with a new application.

- In the first instance it follows the statement of Allah's universal providence and love.

  If two persons, in spite of every sincere desire to love and comfort each other, fail to achieve that end, and have to separate, Allah's all-reaching bounty never fails, for He is the Lord of all things.

- In the second instance it is connected with Allah's Self-existence, Self-excellence, and independence of all creatures:

  all His commands are for our good, and they are given to all His creatures, according to their capacities.

- In the third instance, it is connected with His universal power;

  for He could destroy any individual or nation and create a new one without any loss to Himself; but He gives a chance to all again and again, and even rewards them beyond their own ambitions.

... وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَنِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ...

Verily We have directed the People of the Book before you, and you (O Muslims) to fear Allah.

... وَإِن تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

But if ye deny Him, lo! unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth,

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيدًا (١٣١)

and Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

C641. Allah's existence is absolute existence. It does not depend on any other person or any other thing. And it is worthy of all praise, for it is all-good and comprises every possible excellence.

It is necessary to stress this point in order to show that the moral law for man is not a mere matter of transcendental commands, but really rests on the essential needs of mankind itself. If therefore such schools of thought as Behaviorism proved their theories up to the hilt, they do not affect the position of Islam in the least.

The highest ethical standards are enjoined by Islam, not as dogmatic imperatives, but because they can be shown to follow from the needs of man's nature and the results of man's experience.

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

132. Yea, unto Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth,

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلاً (١٣٢)

and enough is Allah to carry through all affairs.

C642. This refers to the next verse.

He does not need us. but we need Him. Our hopes, our happiness, our success centre in Him; but He is Self-sufficient.

He has the power to supersede us, but His goodness is ever seeking to give us every chance in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ بِآخَرِينَ...

133. If it were His will, He could destroy you, O mankind, and create another race:

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ قَدِيرًا (١٣٣)

for He hath power this to do.

مَّن كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِندَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

134. If anyone desires a reward in this life, in Allah's (gift) is the reward (both) of this life and of the Hereafter:

C643. Man in this life can only see up to the horizon of this life. The highest rewards which his wishes or ambitions can conceive of are conceived in the terms of this life.

But Allah can give him not only these but something infinitely higher, the rewards of the Hereafter, which it did not even enter his heart to ask for or his imagination to conceive.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (١٣٤)

for Allah is He that heareth and seeth (all things).

Section 20

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

135. O ye who believe!

... كُونُواْ قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاء لِلّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ أوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالأقْرَبِينَ...

stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin,

C644. Justice is Allah's attribute, and stand firm for justice is to be a witness to Allah, even if it is detrimental to our own interests (as we conceive them) or the interests of those who are near and dear to us.

According to the Latin saying, "Let justice be done though heaven should fall."

But Islamic justice is something higher than the formal justice of Roman Law or any other human law. It is even more penetrative than the subtler justice in the speculations of the Greek philosophers. It searches out the innermost motives, because we are to act as in the presence of Allah, to whom all things, acts, and motives are known.

إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا ...

and whether it be (against) rich or poor:

C645. Some people may he inclined to favour the rich, because they expect something from them. Some people may be inclined to favour the poor because they are generally helpless.

Partiality in either case is wrong. Be just, without fear of favour.

Both the rich and the poor are under Allah's protection as far as their legitimate interests are concerned, but they cannot expect to be favoured at the expense of others. And He can protect their interests far better than any man.

... فَاللّهُ أَوْلَى بِهِمَا...

for Allah can best protect both.

... فَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ الْهَوَى أَن تَعْدِلُواْ...

Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve,

... وَإِن تَلْوُواْ أَوْ تُعْرِضُواْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١٣٥)

and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ آمِنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...

136. O ye who believe! believe in Allah and His Messenger,

... وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِيَ أَنزَلَ مِن قَبْلُ...

and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger and the scripture which He sent to those before (him).

C646. If your belief is by habit or birth or the example of those you love or respect or admire, make that belief more specific and personal to yourself. We must not only have faith, but realise that faith in our inmost being.

The chief objects of our Faith are Allah. His Messenger, and His Revelations.

To all these we must give a home in our hearts. The angels we do not see and realise as we realise Allah, who is nearer to us than the vehicle of our life-blood, and the Day of Judgment is for our future experience, but we must not deny them, or we cut off a part of our religious view.

... وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِاللّهِ وَمَلآئِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ

ضَلاَلاً بَعِيدًا (١٣٦)

And who denieth Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment, hath gone far, far astray.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ثُمَّ كَفَرُواْ ثُمَّ آمَنُواْ ثُمَّ كَفَرُواْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُواْ كُفْرًا...

137. Those who believe, then reject faith, then believe (again) and (again) reject faith, and go on increasing in unbelief,

... لَمْ يَكُنِ اللّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلاَ لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيلاً (١٣٧)

Allah will not forgive them nor guide them on the way.

C647. Those who go on changing sides again and again can have no real Faith at any time. Their motives are mere worldly double-dealing. How can they expect Allah's grace or forgiveness?

Here is a clear warning against those who make their religion a mere matter of worldly convenience, True religion goes far deeper. It transforms the very nature of man. After that transformation it is as impossible for him to change as it is for light to become darkness.

بَشِّرِ الْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٣٨)

138. To the hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them (but) a grievous penalty.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاء مِن دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

139. Yea, to those who take for friends unbelievers rather than believers:

... أَيَبْتَغُونَ عِندَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ العِزَّةَ لِلّهِ جَمِيعًا (١٣٩)

is it honor they seek among them?

Nay, all honor is with Allah.

C648. If the motive is some advantage, some honour, - the fountain of all good is Allah.

How can it really be expected from those who deny Faith?

And if there is some show of worldly honour, what is it worth against the contempt they earn in the next world?

وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللّهِ يُكَفَرُ بِهَا

وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا...

140. Already has He sent you word in the Book, that when ye hear the signs of Allah held in defiance and ridicule,

C649. Cf. 6:68, an earlier and Makkan verse. Where we see or hear Truth held in light esteem, we ought to make

our protest and withdraw from such company, not out of arrogance, as if we thought ourselves superior to other people, but out of real humility, lest our own nature be corrupted in such society.

But it is possible that our protest or our sincere remonstrance may change the theme of discourse. In that case we have done good to those who were inclined to hold Truth in light esteem, for we have saved them for ridiculing Truth.

... فَلاَ تَقْعُدُواْ مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُواْ فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ ...

ye are not to sit with them unless they turn to a different theme:

if ye did, ye would be like them.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْكَافِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا (١٤٠)

For Allah will collect the Hypocrites and those who defy faith, all in hell.

الَّذِينَ يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمْ ...

141. (These are) the ones who wait and watch about you:

... فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ قَالُواْ أَلَمْ نَكُن مَّعَكُمْ...

if ye do gain a victory from Allah, they say: "Were we not with you?"

... وَإِن كَانَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُواْ أَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعْكُم مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

But if the unbelievers gain a success, they say (to them):

"Did we not gain an advantage over you, and did we not guard you from the believers?"

... فَاللّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

But Allah will judge betwixt you on the Day of Judgment.

... وَلَن يَجْعَلَ اللّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلاً (١٤١)

And never will Allah grant to the unbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers.

C650. The methods and motives of Hypocrisy are thoroughly unmasked here.

It has no principles, but watches for an opportunity to turn any event to its own advantage. If battle is joined between two inconsistent principles, it has no belief in either, but watches the result.

There is unceasing fight between Good and Evil in this world. if the Good seems to win, the hypocrites range themselves on its side with unctuous words, taking a great part of the credit to themselves. Perhaps the balance tips the other way later, and they have to make their peace with Evil.

"Oh!" they say, we were in the ranks of your enemy before, on purpose to protect you when they were too strong for you!"

This may suit the ways of the world. but the duty of their account will come eventually. For the Good must ultimately triumph.

Section 21

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ...

142. The Hypocrites, they think they are over-reaching Allah, but He will over-reach them:

... وَإِذَا قَامُواْ إِلَى الصَّلاَةِ قَامُواْ كُسَالَى يُرَآؤُونَ النَّاسَ ...

when they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men,

... وَلاَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللّهَ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (١٤٢)

but little do they hold Allah in remembrance.

مُّذَبْذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لاَ إِلَى هَـؤُلاء وَلاَ إِلَى هَـؤُلاء...

143. (They are) distracted in mind even in the midst of it, being (sincerely) for neither one group nor for another.

... وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلاً (١٤٣)

Whom Allah leaves straying, never wilt thou find for him the way.

C651. If we choose evil deliberately and double our guilt by fraud and deception, we do not deceive Allah, but we deceive ourselves. We deprive ourselves of the Grace of Allah, and are left straying away from the Path. In that condition who can guide us or show us the Way?

Our true and right instincts become blunted: our fraud makes us unstable in character; when our fellow-men find out our fraud, any advantages we may have gained by the fraud are lost; and we become truly distracted in mind.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

144. O ye who believe!

... لاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاء مِن دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

take not for friends unbelievers rather than believers:

... أَتُرِيدُونَ أَن تَجْعَلُواْ لِلّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا (١٤٤)

do ye wish to offer Allah an open proof against yourselves?

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرْكِ الأسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ ...

145. The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the fire:

... وَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا (١٤٥)

no helper wilt thou find for them.

إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ تَابُواْ وَأَصْلَحُواْ وَاعْتَصَمُواْ بِاللّهِ وَأَخْلَصُواْ دِينَهُمْ لِلّهِ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

146. Except for those who repent, mend (their life), hold fast to Allah, and purify their religion as in Allah's sight: if so they will be (numbered) with the believers.

C652. Even Hypocrites can obtain forgiveness, on four conditions:

1. sincere repentance, which purifies their mind;

2. amendment of their conduct, which purifies their outer life;
3. steadfastness and devotion to Allah, which strengthens their faith and protects them from the assaults of evil, and
4. sincerity in their religion, or their whole inner being, which brings them as full members into the goodly Fellowship of Faith.

... وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (١٤٦)

And soon will Allah grant to the believers a reward of immense value.

... مَّا يَفْعَلُ اللّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِن شَكَرْتُمْ وَآمَنتُمْ

147. What can Allah gain by your punishment, if ye are grateful and ye believe?

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا (١٤٧)

Nay, it is Allah that recogniseth (all good), and knoweth all things.

C653. There is no pleasure not advantage to Allah in punishing His own creatures, over whom He watches with loving care.

On the contrary He recognises any good -however little- which He finds in us, and delights to give us a reward beyond all measure. His recognition of us is compared by a bold metaphor to our gratitude to Him for His favours.

The epithet **Shakir** is applied to Allah, as here, in 2:158, and other passages.

In 16:121 it is applied to Abraham: "he showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, Who chose him and guided him to a Straight Way."

... لاَّ يُحِبُّ اللّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوَءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلاَّ مَن ظُلِمَ

148. Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done;

C654. We can make a public scandal of evil in many ways.

1. It may be idle sensation-mongering:

   it often leads to more evil by imitation, as where criminal deeds are glorified in a cinema, or talked about shamelessly in a novel or drama.

2. It may be malicious gossip of a foolish, personal kind:

   it does no good, but it hurts people's feelings.

3. it may be malevolent slander or libel:

   it is intended deliberately to cause harm to people's reputation or injure them in other ways, and is rightly punishable under all laws.

4. It may be a public rebuke or correction or remonstrance, without malice.

1, 2 and 3 are absolutely forbidden.

4 may be by a person in authority; in which case the exception applies, for all wrong or injustice must be corrected openly, to prevent its recurrence. Or

4 may be a person not vested with authority, but acting either from motives of public spirit, or in order to help some one who has been wronged; here again the exception will apply. But if the motive is different, the exception does not apply.

4 would also include a public complaint by a person who has suffered a wrong; he has every right to seek public redress.

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا (١٤٨)

for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth all things.

إِن تُبْدُواْ خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُواْ عَن سُوَءٍ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا (١٤٩)

149. Whether ye publish a good deed or conceal it or cover evil with pardon,

verily Allah doth blot out (sins) and hath power (in the judgment of values).

C655. Qadir: The root *qadara* not only implies power, ability, strength, but two other ideas which it is difficult

to convey in a single word, viz., the act and power of estimating the true value of a thing or persons, as in 6:91; and the act and power of regulating something so as to bring it into correspondence with something.

"Judgment of values" I think sums up these finer shades of meaning.

Allah forgives what is wrong and is able fully to appreciate and judge of the value of our good deeds whether we publish them or conceal them.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ...

150. Those who deny Allah and His Messengers,

... وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ...

and (those who) wish to separate Allah from His Messengers,

... وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ ...

saying: "We believe in some but reject others":

... وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ سَبِيلًا (١٥٠)

and (those who) wish to take a course midway.

C656. Unbelief takes various forms. Three are mentioned here:

- denial of Allah and His revelation to mankind through inspired men;
- a sort of nominal belief in Allah and His Prophets, but one which is partial, and mixed up with racial pride, which does not allow of the recognition of any Messengers beyond those of a particular race; and
- a nominal belief in universal revelation, but so hedged round with peculiar doctrines of exclusive salvation, that it practically approaches to a denial of Allah's universal love for all mankind and all Creation.

All three amount to Unbelief. for they really deny Allah's universal love and care.

أُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا (١٥١)

151. They are in truth (equally) unbelievers;
and We have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُواْ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ أُوْلَـئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ...

152. To those who believe in Allah and His Messengers and make no distinction between any of the Messengers, We shall soon give their (due) rewards:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (١٥٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C.68 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(4:153-176)

The People of the Book went wrong
The Jews in breaking their Covenant,
And slandering Mary and Jesus,
And in their usury and injustice;
And the Christians in raising
Jesus the Messengers to equality
Wit Allah. Allah's revelation
Is continued in Quran,
Which comes with manifest proof
And a clear light to those who understand.

Section 22

يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَن تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاء...

153. The People of the Book ask thee to cause a book to descend to them from heaven:

... فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا مُوسَى أَكْبَرَ مِن ذَٰلِكَ فَقَالُوا أَرِنَا اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً ...

indeed they asked Moses for an even greater (miracle), for they said:

"Show us Allah in public,"

C657. Cf. 2:55, for the thunder and lightning which affected those who were presumptuous enough to ask that they should see Allah face to face, and 2:51 and n. 66, for the worship of the golden calf.

The lesson is that it is presumptuous on the part of man to judge of spiritual things in terms of material things, or to ask to see Allah with their material eyes when Allah is above material forms and is independent of time and space.

... فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ...

but they were dazed for their presumption, with thunder and lightning.

... ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَن ذَٰلِكَ...

Yet they worshipped the calf even after clear signs had come to them; even so We forgave them;

... وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَى سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا (١٥٣)

and gave Moses manifest proofs of authority.

وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ بِمِيثَاقِهِمْ ...

154. And for their Covenant We raised over them (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai);

C658. In this verse there is a recapitulation of three salient incidents of Jewish refractoriness already referred to in the second Surah: viz.,

1. the Covenant under the towering height of Sinai, 2:63:
2. their arrogance where they were commanded humility in entering a town, 2:58: and
3. their transgression of the Sabbath, 2:65.

... وَقُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُواْ الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا...

and (on another occasion) We said: "Enter the gate with humility;"

... وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لاَ تَعْدُواْ فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (١٥٤)

and (once again) We commanded them: "Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath."

And We took from them a solemn Covenant.

... فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِم بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الأَنْبِيَاء بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ

155. (They have incurred divine displeasure):

C659. In verses 155, 156, 157, 160 (latter half), and 161 with parenthetical clauses including those in verses 158-159, and 160 (first half), there is a catalogue of the iniquities of which the Jews were guilty, and for these iniquities we must understand some such words as:

"They are under divine displeasure."

Each clause of the indictment I have indicated by prefixing the word "that."

in that they broke their Covenant: that they rejected the Signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers in defiance of right;

C660. Cf. 3:21, and notes 363 and 364.

... وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ...

that they said, "Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah's Word; we need no more);"

C661. Cf. 2:88, and n. 92, where the full meaning is explained.

Note the crescendo (heightening effect) in the argument. Their iniquities were:

1. that they broke their Covenant:
2. that they rejected Allah's guidance as conveyed in His signs;
3. that they killed Allah's Messengers and incurred a double guilt, viz., that of murder and that of a deliberate defiance of Allah's law; and

4. that they imagined themselves arrogantly self-sufficient, which means a blasphemous closing of their hearts for ever against the admission of Allah's grace.

Then begins another series of iniquities from a different point of view:

1. that they rejected Faith:
2. that they made false charges against a saintly woman like Mary, who. was chosen by Allah to be the mother of Jesus;
3. that they boasted of having killed Jesus when they were victims of their own self-hallucination:
4. that they hindered people from Allah's way: and
5. that by means of usury and fraud they oppressed their fellow-men.

... بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (١٥٥)

nay Allah hath set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy, and little is it they believe.

وَبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَى مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا (١٥٦)

156. That they rejected faith: that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge.

C662. The false charge against Mary was that she was unchaste.

Cf. 19:27-28.

Such a charge is bad enough to make against any woman, but to make it against Mary, the mother of Jesus, was to bring into ridicule Allah's power itself.

Islam is specially strong in guarding the reputation of women. Slanderers of women are bound to bring four witnesses in support of their accusations, and if they fail to produce four witnesses, they are to be flogged with eighty stripes and debarred from being competent witnesses: 24:4.

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ...

157. That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah;"

... وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَـكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ...

but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them,

C663. The end of the life of Jesus on earth is as much involved in mystery as his birth, and indeed the greater part of his private life, except the three main years of his ministry.

It is not profitable to discuss the many doubts and conjectures among the early Christian sects and among Muslim theologians. The Orthodox Christian Churches make it a cardinal point of their doctrine that his life was taken on the Cross, that he died and was buried, that on the third day he rose in the body with his wounds intact, and walked about and conversed, and ate with his disciples, and was afterwards taken up bodily to heaven. This is necessary for the theological doctrine of blood sacrifice and vicarious atonement for sins, which is rejected by Islam.

But some of the early Christian sects did not believe that Christ was killed on the Cross.

- The Basilidans believed that some one else was substituted for him.
- The Docetae held that Christ never had a real physical or natural body, but only an apparent or phantom body, and that his Crucifixion was only apparent, not real.
- The Marcionite Gospel (about A.D. 138) denied that Jesus was born, and merely said that he appeared in human form.

The Gospel of St. Barnabas supported the theory of substitution on the, Cross.

The Quranic teaching is that Christ was not crucified nor killed by the Jews, notwithstanding certain apparent

circumstances which produced that illusion in the minds of some of his enemies: that disputations, doubts, and conjectures on such matters are vain; and that he was taken up to Allah (see next verse and note).

... وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ...

and those who differ therein are full of doubts,

... مَا لَهُم بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلاَّ اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا (١٥٧)

with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow for of a surety they killed him not.

بَل رَّفَعَهُ اللّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (١٥٨)

158. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

C664. There is difference of opinion as to the exact interpretation of this verse. The words are:

The Jews did not kill Jesus, but Allah raised him up (rafau) to Himself.

One school holds that Jesus did not die the usual human death, but still lives in the body in heaven, which is the generally accepted Muslim view.

Another holds that he did die but not when he was supposed to be crucified, and that his being "raised up" unto Allah means that instead of being disgraced as a malefactor, as the Jews intended, he was on the contrary honoured by Allah as His Messenger:

see also next verse.

The same word rafa'a is used in association with honour in connection with Mustafa in 94:4. (R).

وَإِن مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلاَّ لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ...

159. And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death;

C665. Before his death: Interpreters are not agreed as to the exact meaning.

Those who hold that Jesus did not die refer the pronoun "his" to Jesus. They say that Jesus is still living in the body and that he will appear just before the Final Day, after the coming of the Mahdi, when the world will be purified of sin and unbelief. There will be a final death before the final Resurrection, but all will have believed before that final death.

Others think that "his" is better referred, to "none of the People of the Book", and that the emphatic form "must believe" (layu 'minanna) denotes more a question of duty than of fact. (R).

... وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا (١٥٩)

and on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them.

C666. Cf. 4:41

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبَاتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ...

160. For the iniquity of the Jews We made unlawful for them certain (foods) good and wholesome which had been lawful for them;

C667. Cf. 6:146.

The ceremonial law of the Jews forbade the eating of the flesh of the camel, rabbit and hare (Leviticus 11:4-6), and the fat of oxen, sheep, and goats (Leviticus 7:23), and was in other respects very strict.

... وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا (١٦٠)

in that they hindered many from Allah's way.

وَأَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلِهِمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ ...

161. That they took usury (interest), though they were forbidden; and that they devoured men's substance wrongfully;

... وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٦١)

We have prepared for those among them who reject faith a grievous punishment.

لَـكِنِ الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ...

162. But those among them who are well-grounded in knowledge, and the believers, believe in what hath been revealed to thee;

... وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

and (especially) those who establish regular prayer and practice regular charity and believe in Allah and in the Last Day:

... أُولَـئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (١٦٢)

to them shall We soon give a great reward.

Section 23

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِن بَعْدِهِ...

163. We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him;

C668. First we have a general statement:

that inspiration was sent to many Messengers, and the inspiration was of the same kind as that sent to the Prophet Muhammad, for Allah's Message is one.

Note that what is spoken of here is Inspiration, not necessarily a Book.

Every nation or group of people had a messenger: 10:47. Some of these messengers have been mentioned by name in the Quran, and some not: 4:164.

... وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالأَسْبَاطِ ...

We sent inspiration to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes,

C669. Cf. 2:136 and 3:84.

The list here given is in three groups.

- The first group, Abraham's family, is the same as in 2:136, (where see the note) and in 3:84.

- Then we have the prophets Jesus, Job and Jonah, who symbolize patience and perseverance.

- Then we have Aaron the priest and Solomon the King, both great, figures, but each subordinate to another primary figure, viz., Moses (mentioned in the next verse) and David (mentioned at the end of this verse),

  David's distinction was the Psalms, some of which are still extant. Though their present form is different from the original and they do undoubtedly include Psalms not written by David, the collection contains much devotional poetry of a high order. (R).

... وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ ...

to Jesus Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon,

... وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا (١٦٣)

and to David We gave the Psalms.

وَرُسُلاً قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ وَرُسُلاً لَّمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ...

164. Of some Messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not;

... وَكَلَّمَ اللّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا (١٦٤)

and to Moses Allah spoke direct.

C670. Allah spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. Hence the title of Moses in Muslim theology:

Kalim Allah: the one to whom Allah spoke.

رُّسُلاً مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلاَّ يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ...

165. Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the Messengers, should have no plea against Allah:

C671. Every prophet proclaims Allah's goodness to the righteous and forgiveness to those who repent, (good

news), and the Wrath to come for those who reject Faith and live in iniquity (warning).

Their mission of warning is a prelude and complement to their mission of good news. No one can then say that he or she did not know.

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (١٦٥)

for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

...لَـكِنِ اللّهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَا أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكَ أَنزَلَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ وَالْمَلآئِكَةُ

166. But Allah beareth witness that what He hath sent unto thee He hath sent from His (Own) Knowledge, and the angels bear witness:

C672. Inspiration, though it is clothed in human language, and shaped to the personality of the inspired one, proceeds from the knowledge of Allah. (R).

... يَشْهَدُونَ وَكَفَى بِاللّهِ شَهِيدًا (١٦٦)

but enough is Allah for a Witness.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَصَدُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّواْ ضَلاَلاً بَعِيدًا (١٦٧)

167. Those who reject faith and keep off (men) from the way of Allah, have verily strayed far, far away from the path.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَظَلَمُواْ لَمْ يَكُنِ اللّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلاَ لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقاً (١٦٨)

168. Those who reject faith and do wrong, Allah will not forgive them nor guide them to any way.

إِلاَّ طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

169. Except the way of Hell, to dwell therein for ever:

... وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللّهِ يَسِيرًا (١٦٩)

and this to Allah is easy.

C673. Easy: not in the sense that Allah takes any pleasure in any of His creatures going astray. The contrary is the case: for Allah's Grace recognises all good in us to such an extent that it is compared to gratitude in 4:147: see n. 653.

We must understand easy in the sense that Allah is Supreme in knowledge and power; if any forces of rebellion foolishly think that they can evade punishment, they are mistaken. Punishment comes as a matter of course. It is not a matter of difficulty or exertion on the part of Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءكُمُ الرَّسُولُ بِالْحَقِّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ فَآمِنُواْ خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ...

170. O mankind! the Messenger hath come to you in truth from Allah: believe in him: it is best for you.

C674. Allah's solicitude for us is for our own good, not because He gets any advantage from it. For He is independent of all things, and everything declares His glory and praise.

... وَإِن تَكْفُرُواْ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

But if ye reject faith, to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth:

... وَكَانَ اللّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١٧٠)

and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لاَ تَغْلُواْ فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلاَ تَقُولُواْ عَلَى اللّهِ إِلاَّ الْحَقِّ ...

171. O People of the Book! commit no **excesses** in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but truth.

C675. Just as a foolish servant may go wrong by excess of zeal for his master, so in religion people's excesses may lead them to blasphemy or a spirit the very opposite of religion.

The Jewish excesses in the direction of formalism, racialism, exclusiveness, and rejection of Christ Jesus have been denounced in many places. Here the Christian attitude is condemned, which raises Jesus to an equality with Allah: in some cases venerates Mary almost to idolatry: attributes a physical son to Allah: and invents the doctrine of the Trinity, opposed to all reason, which according to the Athanasian Creed, unless a man believes, he is doomed to hell for ever.

Let our Muslims also beware lest they fall into excesses either in doctrine or in formalism.

... إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِّنْهُ...

Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him:

... فَآمِنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ...

so believe in Allah and His Messengers.

... وَلاَ تَقُولُواْ ثَلاَثَةٌ انتَهُواْ خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ...

Say not "Trinity": desist: it will be better for you:

C676. Christ's attributes are mentioned:

- that he was the son of a woman, Mary and therefore a man;
- but a messenger, a man with a mission from Allah, and therefore entitled to honour;
- a Word bestowed on Mary, for he was created by Allah's word "Be" (kun) and he was: 3:59;
- a spirit proceeding from Allah, but not Allah:

  his life and his mission were more limited than in the case of some other Messengers, though we must pay equal honour to him as a Prophet of Allah.

The doctrines of Trinity, equality with Allah, and sonship, are repudiated as blasphemies. Allah is independent of all needs and has no need of a son to manage His affairs.

The Gospel of John (whoever wrote it) has put in a great deal of Alexandrian and Gnostic mysticism round the doctrine of the Word (Greek, Logos), but it is simply explained here. (R).

... إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَـهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَن يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ...

for Allah is One Allah: glory be to Him: (for Exalted is He) above having a son.

... لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth.

... وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلاً (١٧١)

And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

Section 24

لَّن يَسْتَنكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَن يَكُونَ عَبْداً لِّلَّهِ وَلاَ الْمَلآئِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ...

172. Christ disdaineth not to serve and worship Allah, nor do the angels, those nearest (to Allah):

C677. Christ often watched and prayed, as a humble worshipper of Allah; and his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was full of human dignity, suffering, and self-humiliation (see Matt. 26:36-45).

... وَمَن يَسْتَنكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ إِلَيهِ جَمِيعًا (١٧٢)

those who disdain His worship and are arrogant, He will gather them all together unto Himself to (answer).

C678. The disdainful and the arrogant are the crew of Satan, who will be gathered together before the Supreme Throne for punishment.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدُهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ...

173. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards, and more, out of His bounty:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَنكَفُواْ وَاسْتَكْبَرُواْ فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا...

but those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish with a grievous penalty;

... وَلاَ يَجِدُونَ لَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلاَ نَصِيرًا (١٧٣)

nor will they find, besides Allah, any to protect or help them.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءكُم بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًا (١٧٤)

174. O mankind! verily there hath come to you a convincing proof from your Lord: for We have sent unto you a light (that is) manifest.

C679. The **Proof** and the **Light** are the Quran and the Personality, Life and Teaching of Muhammad Mustafa.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ...

175. Then those who believe in Allah, and hold fast to Him, soon will He admit them to Mercy and Grace from Himself,

C680. From Himself: From His Presence;

see 3:195 and n. 501.

The Mercy and Grace are expressed here as specially bestowed by Him.

... وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا (١٧٥)

and guide them to Himself by a straight Way.

يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ قُلِ اللّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلاَلَةِ...

176. They ask thee for a legal decision.

Say:

Allah directs (thus) about those who leave no descendants or ascendants as heirs.

... إِنِ امْرُؤٌ هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَهُ أُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ...

If it is a man that dies, leaving a sister but no child, she shall have half the inheritance:

C681. This verse supplements the rule of inheritance of the estate of a deceased person who has left as heir neither a descendant nor an ascendant.

We shall call such a person A, who may be either a male or a female. In 4:12 (second half), A's case was considered where he had left uterine brothers or sisters.

Here A's case is considered where he has left brothers and or sisters by the father's side, whether the mother was the same or not.

"Brothers" and "sisters" in this verse must be construed to be such brothers and sisters.

For the sake of clearness, I have expanded the terse language of the original in the translation. Let me explain it more concretely in this note-A, and "brother" and "sister" being strictly defined as above, we proceed to consider how A's inheritance would be divided.

- If A left a widow or widower, the widow's or widower's share would first be calculated as in the first half of 4:12;
- if A left no spouse, this calculation would not be necessary.
- Then if A left a single "sister." she would have a half share, the remaining half (in so for as it, or a part of it, does not fall to a spouse, if any) going to remoter heirs:
- if a single "brother," he would have the whole (subject to the spouse's right if there is a spouse); if more than one "brother," they divide the whole (subject to etc.).
- If A left two or more "sisters," they get between them two-thirds, subject to the spouse's right, if any.
- If A left a "brother" and "sister," or "brothers" and "sisters," they divide on the basis that each "brother's" share is twice that of the "sister" (subject to, etc.).

In all cases debts, funeral expenses, and legacies (to the amount allowed) have priority as in n. 522.

... وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَآ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّهَا وَلَدٌ...

if (such a deceased was) a woman, who left no child, her brother takes her inheritance:

... فَإِن كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلُثَانِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ...

if there are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance (between them):

... وَإِن كَانُواْ إِخْوَةً رِّجَالاً وَنِسَاء فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الأُنثَيَيْنِ...

if there are brothers and sisters, (they share), the male having twice the share of the female.

... يُبَيِّنُ اللّهُ لَكُمْ أَن تَضِلُّواْ وَاللّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٧٦)

Thus doth Allah make clear to you (His law), lest ye err.

And Allah hath knowledge of all things.



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ

O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Ma'idah

الْمَآئِدَةُ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah deals, by way of recapitulation, with the backsliding of the Jews and Christians from their pure religions, to which the coping stone was placed by Islam. It refers particularly to the Christians, and to their solemn Sacrament of the Last Supper, to whose true meaning they are declared to have been false. (R).

As a logical corollary to the corruption of the earlier religions of Allah, the practical precepts of Islam, about food, cleanliness, justice, and fidelity are recapitulated.

The fourth verse contains the memorable declaration;

"This day have I perfected your religion for you":

which was promulgated in 10 H., during the Prophet's last Pilgrimage to Makkah. Chronologically it was the last verse to be revealed.

Summary- Beginning with an appeal to fulfil, as sacred, all obligations, human and divine, it points to certain regulations about food, as conducive to a sober and social life, without superstition and without bias or hatred (5:1-5, and C. 69).

Cleanliness of body, and justice and uprightness of dealing are nearest to Piety (5:6-11, and C. 70).

If the Jews and Christians turned back from the Truth and violated their Covenants, they have had their warning (5:12-26, and C. 71).

The murder of Abel by Cain is the type of the treatment which the just man suffers from the envious. There is punishment from Allah. The just man must not grieve (5:27-43, and C. 72).

Muslims must do impartial justice, but must protect their own Brotherhood and their Faith from insult and scorn; they must appreciate piety, humility, and other good points among the Christians (5:46-86, and C. 73).

They must enjoy with gratitude all that is good and lawful, but guard themselves against excess, Swearing, intoxication, gambling, violation of the Sanctuary, superstitions of all kinds, and false evidence are condemned (5:87-108, and C. 74).

The miracles of Jesus, and how they were misused by those who bore his name (5:109-120, and C. 75)

C. 69 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:1-6)

All obligations are sacred, human
Or divine. In the spiritual world
We owe duties to Allah, which must
Be fulfilled. But whilst we are
In this world of sense, those duties
Are by no means isolated
From what we owe to ourselves
And our fellows in the world
Of men. We must respect the laws
And customs of the Sacred Mosque
And the Sacred Sanctuary.
In food our laws are simple:
All things good and pure are lawful.
We refuse not social intercourse
With men and women-
People of the Book.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ ...

1. O ye who believe!
   fulfil (all) obligations.

C682. This line has been justly admired for its terseness and comprehensiveness.

Obligations: 'uqud the Arabic word implies so many things that a whole chapter of Commentary can be written on it.

First, there are the divine obligations that arise from our spiritual nature and our relation to Allah.

- He created us and implanted in us the faculty of knowledge and foresight: besides the intuition and reason which He gave us.

  He made Nature responsive to our needs, and His Signs in Nature are so many lessons to us in our own inner life;

- He further sent Messengers and Teachers, for the guidance of our conduct in individual, social, and public life.

  All these gifts create corresponding obligations which we must fulfil.

But in our own human and material life we undertake mutual obligations express and implied.

- We make a promise:
- we enter into a commercial or social contract;
- we enter into a contract of marriage:
- we must faithfully fulfil all obligations in all these relationships.

Our group or our State enters into a treaty; every individual in that group or State is bound to see that as far as lies in his power, such obligations are faithfully discharged.

There are tacit obligations;

- living in civil society, we must respect its tacit conventions unless they are morally wrong, and in that case we must get out of such society.
- There are tacit obligations in the characters of host and guest, wayfarer of companion, employer or employed, etc., which every man of Faith must discharge conscientiously.

The man who deserts those who need him and goes to pray in a desert is a coward who disregards his obligations.

All these obligations are inter-connected. Truth and fidelity are parts of religion in all relations of life.

This verse is numbered separately from the succeeding verses. (R).

... أُحِلَّتْ لَكُم بَهِيمَةُ الأَنْعَامِ إِلاَّ مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ...

Lawful unto you (for food) are all four-footed animals, with the exceptions named:

C683. That is, the exceptions named not only in the Quran but in the Sunnah as well.

See 5:3 below. (R).

... غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَأَنتُمْ حُرُمٌ...

but animals of the chase are forbidden while ye are in the Sacred Precincts or in pilgrim garb:

C684. Cf. 5:94-96.

Hunting and the use of game are forbidden "while ye are hurumun," i.e., while ye are;

- in the Sacred Precincts, or
- in the special pilgrim garb (ihram), as to which see n. 212, 2:196.

In most cases the two amount to the same thing. The Sacred Precincts are sanctuary both for man and beast.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ (١)

for Allah doth command according to His Will and Plan.

C685. Allah's commands are not arbitrary. His Will is the perfect Archetype or Plan of the world.

Everything He wills has regard to His Plan, in which are reflected His perfect wisdom and goodness.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لاَ تُحِلُّوا شَعَآئِرَ اللّهِ ...

2. O ye who believe!

violate not the sanctity of the Symbols of Allah,

C686. Cf. 2:158, where Safa and Marwa are called "Symbols (shaair) of Allah".

Here the Symbols are everything connected with the Pilgrimage, viz.,

1. the places (like Safa and Marwa, or the Ka'bah or 'Arafat, etc.);
2. the rites and ceremonies prescribed;
3. prohibitions (such as that of hunting, etc.);
4. the times and seasons prescribed. There is spiritual and moral dimension in all these.

See notes on 2:158, 2:194-200.

... وَلاَ الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ ...

nor of the Sacred Month,

C687. The month of pilgrimage, or else, collectively, the four sacred months (9:36), viz.,

- Rajab (7th).
- Dhu al Qadah (11th),
- Dhu al Hijjah (12th, the month of Pilgrimage), and
- Muharram (the first of the year).

In all these months War was prohibited. Excepting Rajab the other three months are consecutive.

... وَلاَ الْهَدْيَ وَلاَ الْقَلآئِدَ...

nor of the animals brought for sacrifice,

nor the garlands that mark out such animals,

... وَلا آمِّينَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلاً مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا...

nor the people resorting to the Sacred House, seeking of the bounty and good pleasure of their Lord.

C688. The immunity from attack or interference extended to the animals brought as offerings for sacrifice and the garlands or fillets or distinguishing marks which gave them immunity. They were treated as sacred symbols.

And of course every protection or immunity was enjoyed by the Pilgrims.

... وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُواْ...

But when ye are clear of the Sacred Precincts and of pilgrim garb, ye may hunt,

C689. This is the state opposite to that described in n. 684, i.e., when ye have left the Sacred Precincts, and have doffed the special pilgrim garb, showing your return to ordinary life.

... وَلاَ يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ أَن صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَن تَعْتَدُواْ...

and let not the hatred of some people in (once) shutting you out of the Sacred Mosque lead you to transgression (and hostility on your part).

C690. See n. 205 to 2:191.

In the sixth year of the Hijrah the Pagans, by way of hatred and persecution of the Muslims, had prevented them from access to the Sacred Mosque. When the Muslims were re-established in Makkah, some of them wanted to retaliate.

Passing from the immediate event to the general principle, we must not retaliate or return evil for evil. The hatred of the wicked does not justify hostility on our part. We have to help each other in righteousness and piety, not in perpetuating feuds of hatred and enmity. We may have to fight and put down evil, but never in a spirit of malice or hatred, but always in a spirit of justice and righteousness.

... وَتَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى الْبرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى...

Help ye one another in righteousness and piety,

... وَلاَ تَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى الإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ ...

but help ye not one another in sin and rancor:

fear Allah:

... إِنَّ اللّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢)

for Allah is strict in punishment.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّهِ بِهِ...

3. Forbidden to you (for food) are:

- dead meat,
- blood,
- the flesh of swine,
- and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah,

C691. Cf. 2:173 and notes 173 and 174. The prohibition of dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which other names than that of Allah have been invoked, has been there explained.

وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ...

- that which hath been killed by strangling,
  or by a violent blow,
  or by a headlong fall,
  or by being gored to death;

... وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلاَّ مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ ...

- that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form);

C692. If an animal dies;

by strangling, or

by a violent blow, or

a headlong fall, or

by being gored to death, or

by being attacked by a wild animal,

the presumption is that it becomes carrion, as the life-blood is congealed before being taken out of the body.

But the presumption can be rebutted. If the life-blood still flows and the solemn mode of slaughter (*zabh*) in the name of Allah is carried out, it becomes lawful as food.

... وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ ...

- that which is sacrificed on stone (altars);

C693. This was also an idolatrous rite, different from that in which a sacrifice was devoted to a particular idol or a false god.

... وَأَن تَسْتَقْسِمُواْ بِالأَزْلاَمِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ ...

- (forbidden) also is the division (of meat) by raffling with arrows: that is impiety.

C694. Gambling of all kinds is forbidden; 2:219.

A sort of lottery or raffle practised by Pagan Arabs has been described in n. 241.

Division of meat in this way is here forbidden, as it is a form of gambling.

... الْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن دِينِكُمْ ...

This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion:

C695. So long as Islam was not recognised, with its own community and its own laws, the Unbelievers had hoped to wean the Believers from the new Teaching.

(Now that hope was gone, with the complete organisation of Islam).

... فَلاَ تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ...

yet fear them not but fear Me.

... الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ

الإِسْلاَمَ دِينًا ...

This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.

C696. The last verse revealed chronologically, making the approaching end of Mustafa's ministry in his earthly life.

... فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ

رَّحِيمٌ (٣)

But if any forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allah is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ...

4. They ask thee what is lawful to them (as food):

C697. The previous verse was negative; it defined what was not lawful for food, viz., things gross, or disgusting, or dedicated to superstition.

This verse is positive: it defines what is lawful, viz., all things that are good and pure.

... قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ...

say:

- Lawful unto you are (all) things good and pure:

... وَمَا عَلَّمْتُم مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ تُعَلِّمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللّهُ ...

- and what ye have taught your trained hunting animals (to catch) in the manner directed to you by Allah;

... فَكُلُواْ مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُواْ اسْمَ اللّهِ عَلَيْهِ ...

eat what they catch for you, but pronounce the name of Allah over it:

C698. In the matter of the killing for meat, the general rule is that the name of Allah, the true God should be pronounced as a rite in order to call our attention to the fact that we do not take life thoughtlessly but solemnly for food, with the permission of Allah, to whom we render the life back.

The question of hunting is then raised.

How can this solemn rite be performed when we send forth trained hawks, trained hounds, or trained cheetahs or other animals trained for the chase?

They must necessarily kill at some distance from their masters. Their game is legalized on these conditions:

1. that they are trained to kill, not merely for their own appetite, or out of mere wantonness, but for their master's food;

   the training implies that something of the solemnity which Allah has taught us in this matter goes into their action; and

2. we are to pronounce the name of Allah over the quarry; this is interpreted to mean that the Takbir should be pronounced when the hawk or dog, etc., is released to the quarry. (R).

... وَاتَّقُوا اللّهَ إِنَّ اللّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٤)

and fear Allah; for Allah is swift in taking account.

... الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ

5. This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you.

... وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ...

- The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them.

C699. The question is for food generally, such as is ordinarily "good and pure": in the matter of meat it should be killed with some sort of solemnity analogous to that of the Takbir.

The rules of Islam in this respect being analogous to those of the People of the Book, there is no objection to

mutual recognition, as opposed to meat killed by Pagans with superstitious rites. In this respect the Christian rule is the same:

> "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." (Acts, 15:29).

Notice the bracketing of fornication with things unlawful to eat.

... وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن

قَبْلِكُمْ...

- (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time,

C700. Islam is not exclusive. Social intercourse, including inter-marriage, is permitted with the People of the Book.

A Muslim man may marry a woman from their ranks on the same terms as he would marry a Muslim woman, i.e., he must give her an economic and moral status, and must not be actuated merely by motives of lust or physical desire.

A Muslim woman **may not** marry a non-Muslim man, because her Muslim status would be affected; the wife ordinarily takes the nationality and status given by her husband's law.

Any man or woman, of any race or faith, may, on accepting Islam, freely marry any Muslim woman or man, provided it be from motives of purity and chastity and not of lewdness.

... إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ وَلاَ مُتَّخِذِي

أَخْدَانٍ...

when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues.

... وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِالإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الآخِرَةِ مِنَ

الْخَاسِرِينَ (٥)

If anyone rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).

C701. As always, food, cleanliness, social intercourse, marriage and other interests in life, are linked with our duty to Allah and faith in Him.

Duty and faith are for our own benefit, here and in the Hereafter.

C.70 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:6-11)

Allah wishes us to be clean and pure,

At prayer and at other times.

But justice and right conduct,

Even in the face of spite and hatred.

Are nearest to Piety and the love

Of Allah: in Him we put our trust.

Section 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلاةِ...

6. O ye who believe!
when ye prepare for prayer,

... فاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُؤُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ

إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ...

- wash your faces,
- and your hands (and arms) to the elbows;
- rub your heads (with water);
- and (wash) your feet to the ankles.

C702. These are the essentials of Wudu, or ablutions preparatory to prayers, viz.,

1. to bathe the whole face in water, and
2. both hands and arms to the elbows,
3. with a little rubbing of the head with water (as the head is usually protected and comparatively clean), and
4. the bathing of the feet to the ankles.

In addition, following the practice of the Prophet, it is usual first to wash the mouth, and the nose before proceeding with the face, etc.

... وَإِن كُنتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ...

If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body.

C703. Cf. 4:43 and n. 563.

Ritual impurity arises from sex pollution.

... وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاء أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ

لاَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاء ...

But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women,

... فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاء فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُم مِّنْهُ ...

and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands.

C704. This is Tayammum, or wiping with clean sand or earth where water is not available.

I take it that this substitute is permissible both for Wudhu and for a full bath, in the circumstances mentioned.

... مَا يُرِيدُ اللّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّنْ حَرَجٍ ...

Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty,

... وَلَـٰكِن يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٦)

but to make you clean, and to complete His favor to you, that ye may be grateful.

وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ الَّذِي وَاثَقَكُم بِهِ...

7. And call in remembrance the favor of Allah unto you, and His Covenant, which He ratified with you,

C705. There is a particular and a general meaning.

The particular meaning refers to the solemn Pledge and Covenant taken by two groups of people at 'Aqabah, a valley near Mina,

- the first about fourteen months before the Hijrah, and
- the second a little later.

These were Pledges of fealty to the Messenger of Allah, comparable to the Covenant under Mount Sinai taken in the time of Moses (See 2:63 and n. 78).

The general meaning has been explained in n. 682 to 5:1: man is under a spiritual obligation under an implied Covenant with Allah:

Allah has given man reason, judgment, the higher faculties of the soul, and even the position of vicegerent on earth (2:30), and man is bound to serve Allah faithfully-and obey His Will.

That obedience begins with cleanliness in bodily functions, food, etc. It goes on to cleanliness of mind and thought, and culminates in purity of motives in the inmost recesses of his heart and soul.

... إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا...

when ye said: "We hear and we obey":

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٧)

and fear Allah, for Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ كُونُواْ قَوَّامِينَ لِلّهِ شُهَدَاء بِالْقِسْطِ ...

8. O ye who believe!

stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing,

C706. Cf. 4:135.

... وَلاَ يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَى أَلاَّ تَعْدِلُواْ...

and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice.

C707. To do justice and act righteously in a favourable or neutral atmosphere is meritorious enough, but the real test comes when you have to do justice to people who hate you or to whom you have an aversion. But no less is required of you by the higher moral law.

... اعْدِلُواْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ ...

Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah,

... إِنَّ اللّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٨)

for Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

وَعَدَ اللّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٩)

9. To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَكَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا أُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (١٠)

10. Those who reject faith and deny our signs will be companions of Hell-fire.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتَ اللّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

11. O ye who believe!

call in remembrance the favor of Allah unto you

... إِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ أَن يَبْسُطُواْ إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنكُمْ ...

when certain men formed the design to stretch out their hands against you, but (Allah) held back their hands from you:

C708. In the life-time of the Prophet it happened again and again that the enemies of Islam stretched out their hands against him, his people, and his teaching. The odds were, from a worldly point of view, in their favour, but their hands were rendered inert and powerless because they were fighting against the truth of Allah.

So does it happen always, now as it did then. True faith must take heart, and at the same time humbly recognise Allah's favour and mercy, and be grateful.

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١١)

so fear Allah. And on Allah let believers put (all) their trust.

C.71 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:12-26)

If the men who received revelations

Before were false to their trust.

If they broke their agreements

And twisted Allah's Message from its aim,

If they rebelled against Truth and followed

Their fancies. Allah's grace was withdrawn

From them and they wandered in the wilderness.

Section 3

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا...

12. Allah did aforetime take a Covenant from the Children of Israel, and We appointed twelve captains among them,

C709. Cf. 2:63 and n. 78.

"Moses... called for the elders of the people... and all the people answered together and said.'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.'" (Exod. 19:7-8).

This was under the towering height of Mount Sinai. The chieftains or elders or leaders of the people were selected, one from each of the twelve tribes (see 2:60 and n. 73).

For census purposes the names of the elders of the tribes are given in Num. 1:4-16: they are called "every one the head of the house of his fathers". Later, twelve other "heads of the Children of Israel" were selected to spy but the land of Canaan: their names are mentioned in Num. 13:1-16.

See also, below, 5:20-26 and notes.

... وَقَالَ اللّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ ...

and Allah said: "I am with you:

... لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنتُم بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ ...

- if ye (but) establish regular prayers,
- practice regular charity,
- believe in My apostles, honor and assist them and

... وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ...

- loan to Allah a beautiful loan,

C710. Cf. 2:245, n. 276.

The phrase means "spending in the cause of Allah".

Allah in His infinite grace looks upon this as a loan, for which He gives a recompense manifold.

... لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ ...

verily I will wipe out from you your evils, and admit you to gardens with rivers flowing beneath;

... فَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ مِنكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاء السَّبِيلِ (١٢)

but if any of you, after this, resisteth faith, he hath truly wandered from the path of rectitude."

C711. The path of rectitude: or the even way:

see 2:108. n. 109.

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَاقَهُمْ لَعنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً ...

13. But because of their breach of their Covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard:

C712. Cursed them: that means that because of the breach of their Covenant, Allah withdrew His overflowing Grace from them.

The withdrawal of Grace made their hearts grow hard in two ways:

1. they were no longer protected from the assaults of evil, and
2. they became impervious even to the message of forgiveness and mercy which is open to all Allah's creatures.

... يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُواْ حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُواْ بِهِ...

they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the Message that was sent them,

... وَلاَ تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَىَ خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّنْهُمُ ...

nor wilt thou cease to find them, barring a few, ever bent on (new) deceits:

C713. Israel, when it lost Allah's grace as above, began to sin against truth and religion in three ways:

1. they began to misuse Scripture itself, by either taking words out of their right meaning, or applying them to things for which they were never meant;
2. in doing so, they conveniently forgot a part of the Message and purpose of Allah: and
3. they invented new deceits to support the old ones.

... فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ...

but forgive them and overlook (their misdeeds):

C714. Cf. 2:109 and n. 110, where I have explained the different shades of meaning in the words for "forgiveness."

... إِنَّ اللّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٣)

for Allah loveth those who are kind.

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُواْ إِنَّا نَصَارَى أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَهُمْ ...

14. From those, too, who call themselves Christians, We did take a Covenant,

C715. The Christian Covenant may be taken to be the charge which Jesus gave to his disciples, and which the disciples accepted, to welcome Ahmad (56:6).

Glimpses of this are to be found in the Gospel of St. John even as it exists now (John 15:26. 16:7).

It is those who call themselves "Christians" who reject this. True Christians have accepted it. The enmity between those who call themselves Christians and the Jews will continue till the Last Day.

... فَنَسُواْ حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُواْ بِهِ ...

but they forgot a good part of the Message that was sent them:

... فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاء إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

so We estranged them, with enmity and hatred between the one and the other, to the Day of Judgment.

... وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللّهُ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَصْنَعُونَ (١٤)

And soon will Allah show them what it is they have done.

C715a. The change from the First Person in the beginning of the verse to the Third Person here illustrates the change from the personal relationship of the Covenant, to the impersonal operation of Justice at Judgment.

Cf. 35:9.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءكُمْ رَسُولُنَا...

15. O People of the Book!

there hath come to you Our Messenger,

... يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَن كَثِيرٍ...

revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book, and passing over much (that is now unnecessary):

... قَدْ جَاءكُم مِّنَ اللّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥)

There hath come to you from Allah a (new) Light and a perspicuous Book.

C716. Mubin: I wish I could translate by a simpler word than "perspicuous". But "plain" may mean unadorned, the opposite of beautiful, and this Book is among the most beautiful that it is the privilege of mankind to read.

"Clear" would be right as far as it means "unambiguous, self-evident, not involved in mysteries of origin, history, or meaning, one which every one can understand as to the essentials necessary for him, without the intervention of priests or privileged persons".

Mubin has all these meanings, but it suggests, besides, some quality of a shining light, by which we are able to make things clear, to distinguish the true from the false. This I think is suggested better by "perspicuous" than by the word "clear". Besides it is hardly good idiom to speak of "a clear Book."

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلاَمِ ...

16. Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety,

... وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنِ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ

مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (١٦)

and leadeth them out of darkness, by His Will,

unto the light, guideth them to a Path that is Straight.

لَّقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُواْ إِنَّ اللّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ...

17. In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary.

... قُلْ فَمَن يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللّهِ شَيْئًا ...

Say:

"Who then hath the least power against Allah,

... إِنْ أَرَادَ أَن يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ وَمَن فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ...

if His Will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all, everyone that is on the earth?

... وَلِلّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

For to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between.

... يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاء ...

He createth what He pleaseth.

C717. The most honoured of the prophets of Allah are but men.

All power belongs to Allah, and not to any man. Allah's creation may take many forms, but because in any particular form it is different from what we see daily around us, it does not cease to be Creation, or to be subject to the power of Allah. No creature can be God.

... وَاللّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٧)

For Allah hath power over all things."

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى نَحْنُ أَبْنَاء اللّهِ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ...

18. (Both) the Jews and the Christians say: "We are sons of Allah, and His beloved."

C718. Sons of Allah:

Cf. Job, 38:7; "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

In the 29th Psalm, 1st verse, the authorized Translation "O ye mighty" should apparently be "O ye sons of Elim". El being a name of God,

Cf. also Genesis, 6:2: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men." Beloved:

Cf. Psalms, 127:2: "He giveth his beloved sleep."

If used figuratively, these and like words refer to the love of Allah. Unfortunately, "son" used in a physical sense, or "beloved" in an exclusive sense as if Allah loved only the Jews, make a mockery of religion.

... قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُم بِذُنُوبِكُم بَلْ أَنتُم بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ ...

Say: "Why then doth He punish you for your sins?

Nay, ye are but men, of the men He hath created:

... يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاء...

He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punisheth whom He pleaseth:

... وَلِلّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ...

and to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between:

C719. This refrain in the last verse negatives the idea of sonship, and in this verse negatives the idea of an exclusive "Beloved".

In both cases it means that Allah is independent of physical relationship or exclusive partiality.

... وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (١٨)

and unto Him is the final goal (of all)."

... يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلَى فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ ...

19. O People of the Book!

now hath come unto you, making (things) clear unto you, Our Messenger, after the break in (the series of) Our messengers,

C720. The six hundred years (in round figures) between Christ and Muhammad were truly the dark ages of the world.

Religion was corrupted: the standard of morals fell low: many false systems and heresies arose; and there was a break in the succession of prophets until the advent of Muhammad.

... أن تَقُولُواْ مَا جَاءنَا مِن بَشِيرٍ وَلاَ نَذِيرٍ فَقَدْ جَاءكُم بَشِيرٌ وَنَذِيرٌ ...

lest ye should say: there came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner (from evil): but now hath come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner (from evil):

... وَاللّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٩)

and Allah hath power over all things.

Section 4

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ ...

20. Remember Moses said to his people:

... يَا قَوْمِ اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَةَ اللّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنبِيَاء ...

"O my people! call in remembrance the favor of Allah unto you, when He produced prophets among you,

C721. There was a long line of patriarchs and prophets before Moses, e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Ismail, Jacob, etc.

... وَجَعَلَكُم مُّلُوكًا...

made you kings,

C722. From the slavery of Egypt the Children of Israel were made free and independent, and thus each man became as it were a king, if only he had obeyed Allah and followed the lead of Moses.

... وَآتَاكُم مَّا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِّن الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٠)

and gave you what He had not given to any other among the peoples.

C723. Cf. Exod. 19:5: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."

Israel was chosen to be the vehicle of Allah's message, the highest honour which any nation can receive.

يَا قَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الأَرْضَ المُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللّهُ لَكُمْ ...

21. "O my people! enter the holy land which Allah hath assigned unto you

C724. We now come to the events detailed in the 13th and 14th chapters of the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament. Read these as a Commentary, and examine a good map of the Sinai Peninsula, showing its connections with Egypt on the west. North-West Arabia on the east, and Palestine on the north-east.

We may suppose that Israel crossed from Egypt into the Peninsula somewhere near the northern extremity of the Gulf of Suez. Moses organized and numbered the people, and instituted the Priesthood. They went south about 200 miles to Mount Sinai where the Torah was received. Then, perhaps a hundred and fifty miles north, was the desert of Paran, close to the southern borders of Canaan.

From the camp there twelve men were sent to spy out the land, and they penetrated as far as Hebron, say about 150 miles north of their camp, about 20 miles south of the future Jerusalem. They saw a rich country, and brought from it pomegranates and figs and a bunch of grapes so heavy that it had to be carried by two men on a staff. They came back and reported that the land was rich, but the men there were too strong for them. The people of Israel had no courage and no faith, and Moses remonstrated with them.

... وَلاَ تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَى أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ (٢١)

and turn not back ignominiously, for then will ye be overthrown, to your own ruin."

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى ...

22. They said: "O Moses!

... إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَن نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتَّىَ يَخْرُجُواْ مِنْهَا...

in this land are a people of exceeding strength: never shall we enter it until they leave it:

C725. The people were not willing to follow the lead of Moses, and were not willing to fight for their "inheritance."

In effect they said: "Turn out the enemy first, and then we shall enter into possession."

In Allah's Law we must work and strive for what we wish to enjoy.

... فَإِن يَخْرُجُواْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ (٢٢)

if (once) they leave, then shall we enter."

... قَالَ رَجُلاَنِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْعَمَ اللّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ...

23. (But) among (their) God-fearing men were two on whom Allah had bestowed His Grace: they said:

C726. Among those who returned after spying out the land were two men who had faith and courage.

They were Joshua and Caleb. Joshua afterwards succeeded Moses in the leadership after 40 years.

These two men pleaded for an immediate entry through the proper Gate, which I understand to mean, "after taking all due precautions and making all due preparations". Cf. 2:189 and n. 203.

But of course, they said, they must put their trust in Allah for victory.

... ادْخُلُواْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ...

"Assault them at the (proper) gate:

... فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمُوهُ فَإِنَّكُمْ غَالِبُونَ ...

when once ye are in, victory will be yours.

... وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُواْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٢٣)

But on Allah put your trust if ye have faith."

قَالُواْ يَا مُوسَى إِنَّا لَن نَّدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَّا دَامُواْ فِيهَا...

24. They said: "O Moses!

while they remain there, never shall we be able to enter, to the end of time.

... فَاذْهَبْ أنتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلا إِنَّا هَاهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ (٢٤)

Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and watch)."

C727. The advice of Joshua and Caleb, and the proposals of Moses under divine instructions were unpalatable to the crowd, whose prejudices were further inflamed by the other ten men who had gone with Joshua and Caleb.

They made an "evil report," and were frightened by the great stature of the Canaanites. The crowd was in open rebellion, was prepared to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, and return to Egypt.

Their reply to Moses was full of irony, insolence, blasphemy, and cowardice. In effect they said:

> "You talk of your God and all that: go with your God and fight there if you like: we shall sit here and watch."

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لا أَمْلِكُ إِلاَّ نَفْسِي وَأَخِي فَافْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ

الْفَاسِقِينَ (٢٥)

25. He said:

"O my Lord! I have power only over myself and my bother, so separate us from this rebellious people!"

C728. "Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation." (Num. 14:5).

According to the words in the Old Testament story, Allah said: "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them." (Num. 14:12).

Moses prayed and interceded. But as we are told here, (a spiritual touch not found in the Jewish story).

Moses was careful to separate himself and his brother from the rebellion.

قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً ...

26. Allah said:

"Therefore will the land be out of their reach for forty years;

C729. The punishment of the rebellion of these stiff-necked people, rebellion that was repeated "these ten times" (Num. 14:22) and more, was that they were left to wander distractedly hither and thither through the wilderness for forty years.

That generation was not to see the Holy Land. All those that were twenty years old and upwards were to die in the wilderness: "your carcasses shall fail in this wilderness." (Num. 14:29). Only those who were then children would reach the Promised land.

And so it happened. From the desert of Paran they wandered south, north, and east for forty years. From the head of what is now the Gulf of Aqabah, they travelled north, keeping to the east side of the depression of which the Dead Sea and the river Jordan are portions.

Forty years afterwards they crossed the Jordan opposite what is now Jericho, but by that time Moses, Aaron, and the whole of the elder generation had died.

... يَتِيهُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ...

in distraction will they wander through the land:

... فَلاَ تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٢٦)

but sorrow thou not over these rebellious people."

C.72 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:27-43)

The jealousy of Cain against Abel,

Which led to the murder

Of innocent Abel, is the type

Of the jealousy between the People

Of the Book and their younger brethren

In Islam. Jealousy leads to envy

And murder. Such crime against
Individuals are often crimes
Against whole peoples. There are
Men who are ready to catch up
Every lie told against a just man,
The just man should not grieve,
For that is their way.

Section 5

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ...

27. Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam. Behold!

C730. Literally; "recite to them in truth the story", etc.

The point is that the story in Gen. 4:1-15 is a bare narrative, not including the lessons now to be enforced.

The Prophet is told now to supply the truth of the matter, the details that will enforce the lessons.

C731. The two sons of Adam were Habil (in the English Bible, Abel) and Qabil (in English, Cain). Cain was the elder, and Abel the younger, -the righteous and innocent one.

Presuming on the right of the elder, Cain was puffed up with arrogance and jealousy, which led him to commit the crime of murder.

Among the Christians, Cain was the type of the Jew as against Abel the Christian. The Jew tried to kill Jesus and exterminate the Christian. In the same way, as against Muhammad, the younger brother of the Semitic family. Cain was the type of the Old Testament and New Testament people, who tried to resist and kill Muhammad and put down his people.

... إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا ...

they each presented a sacrifice (to Allah):

... فَتُقُبِّلَ مِن أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الآخَرِ ...

it was accepted from one, but not from the other.

... قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ...

Said the latter: "Be sure I will slay thee."

... قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٢٧)

"Surely," said the former, "Allah doth accept of the sacrifice of those who are righteous.

لَئِن بَسَطتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَاْ بِبَاسِطٍ يَدِيَ إِلَيْكَ لأَقْتُلَكَ...

28. "If thou dost stretch thy hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against thee to slay thee:

... إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٨)

for I do fear Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds.

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَن تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ...

29. "For me, I intend to let thee draw on thyself my sin as well as thine, for thou wilt be among the companions of the fire,

C732. My sin as well as thine: "My sin" has been interpreted as "the sin against me, in that thou slayest me": in that case thy "sin" may mean;

- either "thy crime in committing a murder." or
- "thy sin against thyself, for the crime causes real loss to thyself in the Hereafter."

See the last clause of the next verse.

... وَذَلِكَ جَزَاء الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٩)

and that is the reward of those who do wrong."

C733. Abel's speech is full of meaning. He is innocent and God-fearing. To the threat of death held out by the other, he returns a calm reply, aimed at reforming the other.

"Surely," he pleads, "if your sacrifice was not accepted, there was something wrong in you, for Allah is just and accepts the sacrifice of the righteous.

If this does not deter you, I am not going to retaliate, though there is as much power in me against you as you have against me.

I fear my Maker, for I know He cherishes all His Creation. Let me warn you that you are doing wrong. I do not intend even to resist, but do you know what the consequences will be to you? You will be in torment."

فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ ...

30. The (selfish) soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother:

... فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٣٠)

he murdered him, and became (himself) one of the lost ones.

C734. The innocent unselfish pleading of the younger brother had no effect, for the soul of the other was full of pride, selfishness and jealousy.

He committed the murder, but in doing so, ruined his own self.

فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ...

31. Then Allah sent a raven, who scratched the ground, to show him how to hide the shame of his brother.

C735. Sawah may mean "corpse", with a suggestion of nakedness and shame in two senses:

1. the sense of being exposed without burial, and
2. the sense of being insulted by being violently deprived by the unwarranted murder, of the soul which inhabited it,- the soul, too, of a brother.

... قَالَ يَا وَيْلَتَا أَعَجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَـذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُوَارِيَ

سَوْءَةَ أَخِي ...

"Woe is me!" said he:

"Was I not even able to be as this raven, and to hide the shame of my brother?"

... فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ (٣١)

Then he became full of regrets.

C736. The thought at last came home to the murderer. It was dreadful indeed to slay any one-the more so as he was a brother, and an innocent righteous brother!

But worse still, the murderer had not even the decency to bury the corpse, and of this simple duty he was reminded by a raven-a black bird usually held in contempt! His regret was on that account.

That was no true repentance.

... مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

32. On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel

... أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ

النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا...

that if anyone slew a person -- unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land -- it would be as if he slew the whole people:

C737. The story of Cain is referred to in a few graphic details in order to tell the story of Israel.

Israel rebelled against Allah, slew and insulted righteous men who did them no harm but on the contrary came in all humility.

When Allah withdrew His favour from Israel because of its sins and bestowed it on brother nation, the jealousy of Israel plunged it deeper into sin.

To kill or seek to kill an individual because he represents an ideal is to kill all who uphold the ideal. On the other hand, to save an individual life in the same circumstances is to save a whole community.

What could be stronger condemnation of individual assassination and revenge?

... وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا...

and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.

... وَلَقَدْ جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالبَيِّنَاتِ ...

Then although there came to them Our Messengers with clear Signs,

... ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ (٣٢)

yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.

إِنَّمَا جَزَاء الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الأَرْضِ فَسَادًا...

33. The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is:

C738. For the double crime of treason against the State, combined with treason against Allah, as shown by overt crimes, four alternative punishments are mentioned, any one of which is to be applied according to the crime committed, viz.,

- execution (cutting off of the head),
- crucifixion,
- maiming, or
- exile.

These were features of the Criminal Law then and for centuries afterwards, except that tortures such as

"hanging, drawing, and quartering" in English Law, and piercing of eyes and leaving the unfortunate victim exposed to a tropical sun, which was practised in Arabia, and all such tortures were abolished.

In any case sincere repentance before it was too late was recognised as a ground for mercy.

... أن يُقَتَّلُواْ أَوْ يُصَلَّبُواْ أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُم مِّنْ خِلافٍ ...

execution, or crucifixion, of the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides,

C739. Understood to mean the right hand and the left foot.

... أَوْ يُنفَوْاْ مِنَ الأَرْضِ...

or exile from the land:

... ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٣٣)

that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter.

... إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ تَابُواْ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَقْدِرُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ

34. Except for those who repent before they fall into your power:

... فَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣٤)

in that case, know that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

35. O ye who believe!

... اتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَابْتَغُواْ إِلَيهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ ...

do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach unto Him,

C740. Taqwa here too might be translated "fear of Allah", but the very next clause shows that "fear of Allah" does not mean "fear" in the ordinary sense, which would make you avoid the object of fear.

On the contrary the "fear of Allah" is the intense desire to avoid everything that is against His Will and Law.

It is in fact duty to Allah, for we are told to seek ardently the means by which we may approach Him, and that can only be done by striving with might and main for His cause.

... وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٣٥)

and strive with might and main in His cause: that ye may prosper.

C741. "Prosper" in the real sense, for that is all that matters, as the life of this world is brief and fleeting, and of small account as against Eternity.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُم مَّا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا...

36. As to those who reject Faith -- if they had everything on earth

... وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لِيَفْتَدُوا بِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا تُقُبِّلَ مِنْهُمْ ...

and twice repeated, to give as ransom for the penalty of the Day of Judgment, it would never be accepted of them.

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٣٦)

Theirs would be a grievous penalty.

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَخْرُجُوا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُم بِخَارِجِينَ مِنْهَا...

37. Their wish will be to get out of the fire, but never will they get out therefrom:

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٣٧)

their penalty will be one that endures.

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاء بِمَا كَسَبَا...

38. As to the thief, male or female,

- cut off his or her hands:

a punishment by way of example,

C742. Here we touch upon jurisprudence. The Canon Law jurists are not unanimous as to the value of the

property stolen, which would involve the penalty of the cutting off of the hand. The majority hold that petty thefts are exempt from this punishment.

The general opinion is that only one hand should be cut off for the first theft, on the principle that "if thy hand or thy foot offends thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee" (Matt. 18:8).

Apparently in the age of Jesus thieves were crucified (Matt. 27:38).

... نَكَالاً مِّنَ اللّهِ وَاللّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٣٨)

from Allah, for their crime: and Allah is Exalted in Power.

فَمَن تَابَ مِن بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ...

39. But if the thief repents after his crime, and amends his conduct, Allah turneth to him in forgiveness;

... إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣٩)

for Allah if Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

40. Knowest thou not that to Allah (alone) belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth?

C743. Punishment really does not belong to mortals, but to Allah alone.

Only, in order to keep civil society together, and protect innocent people from crime, certain principles are laid down on which people can build up their criminal law. But we must always remember that Allah not only punishes but forgives, and forgiveness is the attribute which is more prominently placed before us.

It is not our wisdom that can really define the bounds of forgiveness or punishment, but His Will or Plan, which is the true standard of righteousness and justice.

... يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاء وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاء...

He punisheth whom He pleaseth, and He forgiveth whom He pleaseth:

... وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٤٠)

and Allah hath power over all things.

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ لاَ يَحْزُنكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ ...

41. O Messenger!

let not those grieve thee, who race each other into unbelief:

C744. Two classes of men are meant, viz.,

- the Hypocrites and
- the Jews.

For both of them Al-Mustafa labored earnestly and assiduously, and it must have been a cause of great grief and disappointment to him that some among them showed so much insincerity, great grief an cunning, and hardness of heart.

These are types not yet extinct.

... مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُواْ آمَنَّا بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِن قُلُوبُهُمْ...

(whether it be) among those who say: "We believe" with their lips but whose hearts have no faith;

... وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ هِادُواْ سَمَّاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمَّاعُونَ لِقَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ لَمْ يَأْتُوكَ...

or it be among the Jews, men who will listen to any lie, will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee.

C745. There were men among the Jews who were eager to catch up any lie against the Prophet. They had their ears open even to tales from people who had never so much as come near to the Prophet.

If we understand "for" instead of "to" before "others" (for the Arabic word would bear both meanings), the sense will be:

> They are keen listeners or spies for any lies they can catch; and they will act as spies for others (their Rabbis, etc.) who are in the background but to whom they carry false tales.

... يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِن بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ...

They change the words from their (right) times and places;

C746. Cf. 5:14.

The addition of the words *min ba'di* here suggests the change of words from their right times as well as places.

They did not deal honestly with their Law, and misapplied it, by distorting the meaning.

Or it may be that as tale-bearers they distorted the meaning by misrepresenting the context.

... يَقُولُونَ إِنْ أُوتِيتُمْ هَـذَا فَخُذُوهُ وَإِن لَّمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُواْ...

they say, "If ye are given this, take it, but if not, beware!"

... وَمَن يُرِدِ اللّهُ فِتْنَتَهُ فَلَن تَمْلِكَ لَهُ مِنَ اللّهِ شَيْئًا...

If anyone's trial is intended by Allah, thou hast no authority in the least for him against Allah.

... أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللّهُ أَن يُطَهِّرَ قُلُوبَهُمْ...

For such it is not Allah's will to purify their hearts.

... لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٤١)

For them there is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a heavy punishment.

سَمَّاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ أَكَّالُونَ لِلسُّحْتِ...

42. (They are fond of) listening to falsehood, of devouring anything forbidden.

C747. Devouring anything forbidden: both in a literal and in a figurative sense.

In the figurative sense, it would be:

- the taking of usury or bribes, or
- taking undue advantage of people's weak position or
- their own fiduciary powers to add to their own wealth.

... فَإِن جَآؤُوكَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم أَوْ أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ...

If they do come to thee, either judge between them, or decline to interfere.

C748. Where it is merely a trick to catch out the unwary, a just man may honorably decline to interfere in a cause submitted to him, as also in a case where the parties are not honestly desirous of justice, but each hopes that some partiality will be shown to it.

... وَإِن تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَن يَضُرُّوكَ شَيْئًا...

If thou decline, they cannot hurt thee in the least.

... وَإِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (٤٢)

If thou judge, judge in equity between them; for Allah loveth those who judge in equity.

وَكَيْفَ يُحَكِّمُونَكَ وَعِندَهُمُ التَّوْرَاةُ ...

43. But why do they come to thee for decision, when they have (their own) laws before them?

C749. This is a searching question as to the motive of the Jews in bringing their cases for decision to the Prophet. They came either;

- to ridicule whatever he said, or
- to deceive him as to facts and snatch a favourable decision which was against equity.

If their own Law did not suit their selfish interests, they sometimes twisted it. But Muhammad was always inflexible in his justice.

... فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ...

Therein is the (plain) command of Allah;

... ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ مِن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ وَمَا أُولَٰئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٣)

yet even after that, they would turn away.

For they are not (really) People of Faith.

C.73 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:44-86)

True justice accords with Allah's Law.
Follow not men's selfish desires,
But Allah's Will, which was revealed
To Moses and Jesus, and now to Muhammad.
Take not for friends and protectors
Those in whose hearts is a disease-
To whom religion is a mockery
Or a plaything-who worship evil.
Proclaim the Truth of Allah, and be
Not afraid. Eschew their inequities,
Which were denounced by David,
And Jesus. But recognize with justice
Those who are sincere and humble,
Though they may be themselves
Not of your flock, if they witness to Truth.

Section 7

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا التَّوْرَاةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ...

44. It was We who revealed the Law (to Moses);
therein was guidance and light.

C750. Guidance, with reference to conduct,

light, with reference to insight into the higher realms of the spirit.

... يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالأَحْبَارُ...

By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the Prophet who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's Will, by the Rabbis and the doctors of Law:

C751. Rabbaniyyun may, I think, be rightly translated by the Jewish title of Rabbi for their learned men. Jewish learning is identified with Rabbinical literature.

Ahbar is the plural of hibr or habr, by which we may understand Jewish Doctors of Law.

Later the term was applied to those of other religions.

Query:

Is this word connected with the same root as "Hebrew", or "Eber" (Gen. 10:21), the ancestor of the Hebrew race?

This seems negatived by the fact that the Arabic root connected with the word "Hebrew" is 'Abar, not Habar.

... بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُواْ مِن كِتَابِ اللّهِ وَكَانُواْ عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاء ...

for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto:

C752. They were living witnesses to the truth of Scripture, and could testify that they had made it known to the people:

Cf. 2:143, and 4:135.

... فَلاَ تَخْشَوُاْ النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ وَلاَ تَشْتَرُواْ بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً ...

therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price.

C753. Two charges are made, against the Jews:

1. that even the books which they had, they twisted in meaning, to suit their own purposes, because they feared men rather than Allah:
2. that what they had was but fragments of the original Law given to Moses, mixed up with a lot of semi-historical and legendary matter, and some fine poetry.

The Tawrah mentioned in the Quran is not the Old Testament as we have it: nor is it even the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, containing the

Law embedded in a great deal of semi-historical and legendary narrative).

See Appendix II, on the Tawrah (printed at the end of this Surah).

... وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أنزَلَ اللّهُ فَأُوْلـئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ (٤٤)

If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers.

... وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَا

45. We ordained therein for them:

C754. The retaliation is prescribed in three places in the Pentateuch, viz,. Exod. 21:23-25: Leviticus 24:18-21, and Deut, 19:21.

The wording in the three quotations is different, but in none of them is found the additional rider for mercy, as here.

Note that in Matt. 5:38. Jesus quotes the Old Law "eye for eye," etc,, and modifies it in the direction of forgiveness, but the Quranic injunction is more practical.

Even where the injured one forgives, the State or Ruler is competent to take such action as is necessary for the preservation of law and order in Society. For crime has a bearing that goes beyond the interests of the person injured: the Community is affected: see 5:32.

... أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ...

- "Life for life,
- eye for eye,

... وَالأنفَ بِالأنفِ وَالأُذُنَ بِالأُذُنِ وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ ...

- nose for nose,
- ear for ear,
- tooth for tooth,
- and wounds equal for equal."

... فَمَن تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَّهُ...

But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself.

C755. This is not part of the Mosaic Law, but the teaching of Jesus and of Muhammad.

Notice how the teaching of Jesus is gradually introduced as leading up to the Quran.

... وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٤٥)

And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) wrongdoers.

C756. The seeming repetitions at the end of verses 44, 45 and 46 are not real repetitions. The significant words in the three cases are:

- Unbelievers,
- wrong-doers, and
- rebellious;

and each fits the context.

- If the Jews tamper with their books they are Unbelievers;
- if they give false judgments, they are wrong-doers.
- If the Christians follow not their light, they are rebellious.

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ ...

46. And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him:

... وَآتَيْنَاهُ الإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ ...

We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light,

C757. Guidance and light: see n. 750 above.

For the meaning of the **Gospel (Injil)**, see Appendix III, "On the Injil", (printed at the end of this Surah).

... وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٦)

and confirmation of the Law that had come before him:

a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.

وَلْيَحْكُمْ أَهْلُ الإِنجِيلِ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ فِيهِ ...

47. Let the People of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein.

... وَمَن لَّمْ يَحْكُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٤٧)

If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel.

C758. See n. 756 above.

وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ ...

48. To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety;

C759. After the corruption of the older revelations, the Quran comes with a twofold purpose:

1. to confirm the true and original Message, and
2. to guard it, or act as a check to its interpretation.

The Arabic word **Muhaymin** is very comprehensive in meaning. It means one who;

- safeguards,
- watches over,
- stands witness,
- preserves, and
- upholds.

The Quran safeguards "the Book", for it has preserved within it the teachings of all the former Books. It watches over these Books in the sense that it will not let their true teachings to be lost. It supports and upholds these Books in the sense that it corroborates the Word of Allah

which has remained intact in them. It stands a witness because it bears testimony to the Word of Allah contained in these Books and helps to sort it out from the interpretations and commentaries of the people which were mixed with it: what is confirmed by the Quran is the Word of Allah and what is against it is that of the people. (R).

... فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ...

so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that hath come to thee.

... لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا...

To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way.

C760. Law: shirat, rules of practical conduct.

Open Way: Minhaj. The finer things which are above the law, but which are yet available to everyone, like a sort of open highway. The light in verses 44 and 46 though laws and rules may take different forms among different People.

... وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ...

If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people,

... وَلَـكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَآ آتَاكُم فَاسْتَبِقُوا الخَيْرَاتِ...

but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues.

C761. By origin mankind were a single people or nation: 4:1, and 2:213. That being so Allah could have kept us all alike, with one language, one kind of disposition, and one set of physical conditions (including climate) to live in. But in His wisdom, He gives us diversity in these things, not only at any given time, but in different periods and ages.

This tests our capacity for Unity (*Wahdaniyat*) still more, and accentuates the need of Unity and Islam.

... إِلَى اللهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٨)

The goal of you all is to Allah;

it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.

C762. Men are wont to make conflicting claims regarding Allah, the ultimate destiny of man, and other questions of vital importance.

No matter how vehement and eloquent the proponents of false doctrines might be, their efforts will prove fruitless and it will be indisputably clear on the Day of Judgment as to who entertained false notions and who cherished the truth. (Eds).

وَأَنِ احْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَآ أَنزَلَ اللّهُ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءهُمْ ...

49. And this (He commands): Judge thou between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires,

... وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَن يَفْتِنُوكَ عَن بَعْضِ مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ إِلَيْكَ...

but beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that (teaching) which Allah hath sent down to thee.

... فَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللّهُ أَن يُصِيبَهُم بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ ...

And if they turn away, be assured that for some of their crimes it is Allah's purpose to punish them.

... وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ (٤٩)

And truly most men are rebellious.

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ...

50. Do they then seek after a judgment of (the Days of) Ignorance?

C763. The Days of Ignorance were the days of tribalism, feuds and selfish accentuation of differences in man. Those days are really not yet over.

It is the mission of Islam to take us away from that false mental attitude, towards the true attitude of Unity. If our Faith is certain (and not merely a matter of words). Allah will guide us to that Unity.

... وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (٥٠)

But who, for a people whose faith is assured, can give better judgment than Allah?

Section 8

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاء...

51. O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors:

C764. That is, look not to them for help and comfort. They are more likely to combine against you than to help you. And this happened more than once in the lifetime of the Prophet, and in after-ages again and again.

He who associates with them and shares their counsels must be counted as of them. The trimmer loses whichever way the wheel of fortune turns.

... بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاء بَعْضٍ...

they are but friends and protectors to each other.

... وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُم مِّنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ...

And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥١)

Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust.

فَتَرَى الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ يُسَارِعُونَ فِيهِمْ ...

52. Those in whose heart is a disease, thou seest how eagerly they run about amongst them,

C765. Cf. 2:10.

يَقُولُونَ نَخْشَى أن تُصِيبَنَا دَآئِرَةٌ...

saying: "We do fear lest a change of fortune bring us disaster."

... فَعَسَى اللّهُ أن يَأْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِندِهِ ...

Ah! perhaps Allah will give (thee) victory, or a decision according to His Will.

... فَيُصْبِحُواْ عَلَى مَا أَسَرُّواْ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ نَادِمِينَ (٥٢)

Then will they repent of the thoughts which they secretly harbored in their hearts.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَهَـؤُلاء الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُواْ بِاللّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ

لَمَعَكُمْ...

53. And those who believe will say:

"Are these the men who swore their strongest oaths by Allah, that they were with you?"

C766. The Hypocrites, while matters were doubtful, pretended to be with Muslims, but were in league with their enemies. When matters came to a decision and Allah granted victory to Islam, their position was awkward.

They were not only disowned by the Muslims, but the Muslims could well say in reproach to their enemies:

"Are these the men who swore friendship for you?

What was their friendship worth to you?

Where are they now?".

... حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُواْ خَاسِرِينَ (٥٣)

All that they do will be in vain, and they will fall into (nothing but) ruin.

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

54. O ye who believe!

... مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ...

if any from among you turn back from his faith, soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him,

... أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ...

lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters,

... يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَلاَ يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لآئِمٍ...

fighting in the way of Allah, and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find fault.

C767. As "most men are rebellious" (5:49), it is inevitable that there should be apostates even from such a religion of reason and common-sense as Islam. But here is a warning to the Muslim body that they should not repeat the history of the Jews, and become so self-satisfied or arrogant as to depart from the spirit of Allah's teaching. If they do, the loss will be their own.

Allah's bounty is not confined to one group or section of humanity. He can always raise up people who will follow the true spirit of Islam. That spirit is defined in two ways:

- first in general terms; they will love Allah and Allah will love them; and
- secondly, by specific signs;

  amongst the Brethren, their attitude will be that of humility, but to wrong-doers they will offer no mealy-mouthed compromises;

  they will always strive and fight for truth and right;

  they will know no fear, either physical, or that more insidious form, which says; "What will people say if we act thus?

  They are too great in mind to be haunted by any such thought. For, as the next verse says, their friends are Allah, His Prophet, and His people, the people who judge rightly, without fear or favour.

... ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٥٤)

That is the Grace of Allah, which He will bestow on whom He pleaseth:

and Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things.

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

55. Your (real) friends are (no less than) Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) believers,

... الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاَةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ (٥٥)

those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship).

وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ (٥٦)

56. As to those who turn (for friendship) to Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) believers, it is the fellowship of Allah that must certainly triumph.

Section 9

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُواْ دِينَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا...

57. O ye who believe!

take not for friends and protectors those who take your religion for a mockery or sport,

... مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكُفَّارَ أَوْلِيَاء...

whether among those who received the Scripture before you, or among those who reject Faith;

C768. It is not right that we should be in intimate association with those to whom religion is either a subject of mockery or at best is nothing but a plaything.

They may be amused, or they may have other motives for encouraging you. But your association with them will sap the earnestness of your Faith, and make you cynical and insincere.

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٥٧)

but fear ye Allah, if ye have Faith (indeed).

وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلاَةِ اتَّخَذُوهَا هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا...

58. When ye proclaim your call to prayer, they take it (but) as mockery and sport;

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لاَّ يَعْقِلُونَ (٥٨)

that is because they are a people without understanding.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ هَلْ تَنقِمُونَ مِنَّا إِلاَّ أَنْ آمَنَّا بِاللّهِ ...

59. Say: "O People of the Book! do ye disapprove of us for no other reason than that we believe in Allah,

... وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلُ ...

and the revelation that hath come to us and that which came before (us),

... وَأَنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٥٩)

and (perhaps) that most of you are rebellious and disobedient?"

C769. There is the most biting irony in this and the next verse,

You People of the Book!

Do you hate us because we believe in Allah and not only our scripture, but yours also?

Perhaps you hate us because we obey and you are in rebellion against Allah! Why hate us?

There are worse things than our obedience and our Faith. Shall I tell you some of them?

Our test will be:

what treatment Allah meted out to the things I mention. Who were the people who incurred the curse of Allah? (See Deut. 11:28, and 28:15-68: and numerous passages like Hosea 8:14, and 9:1).

Who provoked Allah's wrath? (See numerous passages like Deut. 1:34: Matt. 3:7).

Who forsook Allah, and worshipped evil? (See Jeremiah, 16:11-13).

That is your record. Is that why you hate us?'

قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُم بِشَرٍّ مِّن ذَلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِندَ اللّهِ ...

60. Say: "Shall I point out to you something much worse than this, (as judged) by the treatment it received from Allah?

... مَن لَّعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتَ...

Those who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath, those of whom some He transformed into apes and swine, those who worshipped Evil;

C770. For apes see 2:65.

For men possessed by devils, and the devils being sent into swine, see Matt. 8:28-32.

Or perhaps both apes and swine are allegorical; those who falsified Allah's scriptures became lawless like apes, and those who succumbed to filth, gluttony, or gross living became like swine.

... أُوْلَـئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَاناً وَأَضَلُّ عَن سَوَاء السَّبِيلِ (٦٠)

these are (many times) worse in rank, and far more astray from the even Path!

وَإِذَا جَآؤُوكُمْ قَالُوَاْ آمَنَّا ...

61. When they come to thee, they say: "We believe":

... وَقَد دَّخَلُواْ بِالْكُفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُواْ بِهِ ...

but in fact they enter with a mind against Faith, and they go out with the same:

... وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْتُمُونَ (٦١)

but Allah knoweth fully all that they hide.

وَتَرَى كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَأَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ...

62. Many of them dost thou see, racing each other in sin and rancor, and their eating of things forbidden.

C771. Eating of things forbidden: may be construed in a literal or a figurative sense.

From its juxtaposition with sin and hatred, it is better to construe it in a figurative sense, as referring to their fraudulent misappropriations of other people's property or trust property.

"Eating" is used in 5:66 below in the general sense of enjoyment and happiness.

... لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (٦٢)

Evil indeed are the things that they do.

... لَوْلاَ يَنْهَاهُمُ الرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالأَحْبَارُ عَن قَوْلِهِمُ الإِثْمَ وَأَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ

63. Why do not the Rabbis and the doctors of laws forbid them from their (habit of) uttering sinful words and eating things forbidden?

... لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُواْ يَصْنَعُونَ (٦٣)

Evil indeed are their works.

... وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ

64. The Jews say: "Allah's hand is tied up."

C772. Cf. 5:12. and 2:245, for a "beautiful loan to Allah",

and 3:181, for the blasphemous taunt, "Then Allah is poor!" It is another form of the taunt to say, "Then Allah's hands are tied up. He is close-fisted. He does not give!"

This blasphemy is repudiated. On the contrary, boundless is Allah's bounty, and He gives, as it were, with both hands outstretched,-a figure of speech for unbounded liberality.

... غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُواْ بِمَا قَالُواْ ...

Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they utter.

... بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاء ...

Nay, both His hands are widely outstretched: He giveth and spendeth (of His bounty) as He pleaseth.

... وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم مَّا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا...

But the revelation that cometh to thee from Allah increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy.

C773. Their jealousy-because Al-Mustafa is chosen for Allah's Message-is so great that it only confirms and strengthens their rebellion and blasphemy.

... وَأَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاء إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ...

Amongst them We have placed enmity and hatred till the Day of Judgment.

C774. Cf. 5:14. where the eternal warring of the Christian sects, among themselves and against the Jews, is referred to.

The reference is to the whole of the People of the Book, Jews and Christians-their internal squabbles and their external disputes, quarrels, and wars.

... كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُواْ نَارًا لِّلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللّهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الأَرْضِ

فَسَادًا...

Every time they kindle the fire of war, Allah doth extinguish it; but they (ever) strive to do mischief on earth.

C775. The argument of the whole verse may be thus stated.

The Jews blaspheme and mock, and because of their jealousy, the more they are taught, the more obstinate they become in their rebellion.

But what good will it do to them?

Their selfishness and spite sow quarrels among themselves, which will not be healed till the Day of Judgment.

When they stir up wars, especially against the innocent. Allah's Mercy is poured down like a flood of water to extinguish them. But their wickedness continues to devise ever new mischief.

And Allah loves not mischief or those who do mischief.

... وَاللّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٦٤)

And Allah loveth not those who do mischief.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ ...

65. If only the People of the Book had believed and been righteous, We should indeed have blotted out their iniquities

... وَلَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (٦٥)

and admitted them to gardens of Bliss.

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَاةَ وَالإِنجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيهِم مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

66. If only they had stood fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that was sent to them from their Lord,

... لأَكَلُوا مِن فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِم...

they would have enjoyed happiness from every side.

C776. The literal translation of this line would be:

> "They would have eaten from above them and from below their feet."

To eat (akala) is a very comprehensive word, and denotes enjoyment generally, physical, social, mental and moral, and spiritual.

"To eat what is forbidden" in verses 62 and 63 referred to taking unlawful profit, from usury or trust funds or in other ways.

Here **"eating"** would seem to mean receiving satisfaction or happiness in this life as well as in the life to come.

"From above them" may refer to heavenly or spiritual satisfaction, and "from below their feet" to earthly satisfaction.

But it is better to take the words as a general idiom, and understand "satisfaction or happiness from every side." (R).

... مِّنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَاء مَا يَعْمَلُونَ (٦٦)

There is from among them a party on the right course;

but many of them follow a course that is evil.

Section 10

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ...

67. O Messenger! proclaim the (Message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord.

C777. Muhammad had many difficulties to contend with, many enemies and dangers to avoid.

Hi; mission must be fulfilled. And he must-as he did-go forward and proclaim that Message and fulfil his mission, trusting to Allah for protection, and unconcerned if people who had lost all sense of right rejected it or threatened him.

... وَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ...

If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission:

... وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ...

and Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief).

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٦٧)

For Allah guideth not those who reject Faith.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ ...

68. Say: "O People of the Book!

... لَسْتُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ حَتَّىَ تُقِيمُواْ التَّوْرَاةَ وَالإِنجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ...

ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord."

... وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُم مَّا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا...

It is the revelation that cometh to thee from thy Lord, that increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy.

... فَلاَ تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (٦٨)

But sorrow thou not over (these) people without Faith.

C778. In 5:26, Moses was told not to sorrow over a rebellious people. Here Muhammad is told not to sorrow over people without Faith.

The second situation is even more trying than the first. Rebellion may be a passing phase. Want of faith is an attitude of mind that is well-nigh hopeless. Yet the Prophet patiently reasoned with them and bore their taunts and insults.

If. the argument runs, you do not believe in anything, even in the things that you may be expected to believe in, how can you receive in Faith Allah's Message that has come in another form? In fact your jealousy adds to your obstinacy and unbelief.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَالَّذِينَ هَادُواْ وَالصَّابِؤُونَ وَالنَّصَارَى...

69. Those who believe (in the Qur'án), those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christians,

... مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وعَمِلَ صَالِحًا...

any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness,

C779. Here, as in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:62), the Quran underscores the importance of true and genuine faith, which is to be judged by a sincere belief in Allah and man's accountability to Him backed by a righteous conduct rather than by mere forms or labels.

At both the places it repudiates the false claims of the People of the Book that they had a special relationship with Allah for they were the children of Abraham; that they were a chosen people with special privileges, and no matter what they did, their high status would remain unaffected.

Here this false notion is refuted and the People of the Book are being reminded that it is through sincere belief and righteous conduct rather than pretentious claims

that man can win his Lord's pleasure and achieve ultimate success.

The verse does not purport to lay down an exhaustive list of the articles of faith. Nor does it seek to spell out the essentials of a genuine belief in Allah, which has no meaning unless it is accompanied by belief in His Prophets for it is through their agency alone that we know Allah's Will and can abide by it in our practical lives.

This is especially true of His final Prophet, Muhammad (peace be on him) whose message is universal, and not confined to any particular group or section of humanity.

Belief in the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be on him) is thus an integral part and a logical corollary of belief in Allah. Moreover, it is also an essential test of genuineness of such belief. This becomes clear when the verse is read in conjunction with other relevant verses of the Quran.

See, for instance, 4:170, 5:15, 19, 7:157, 158, 21:107, 25:I, 33:40, 61:6.

See also 2:40, 3:31-32, 4:150-151. (Eds).

... فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦٩)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

... لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ رُسُلاً

70. We took the Covenant of the Children of Israel and sent them Messengers.

... كُلَّمَا جَاءهُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لاَ تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُهُمْ فَرِيقًا كَذَّبُواْ وَفَرِيقًا

يَقْتُلُونَ (٧٠)

Every time there came to them an apostle with what they themselves desired not --

some (of these) they called impostors, and some they (go so far as to) slay.

C780. Cf. 2:87, and n. 91.

وَحَسِبُوا أَلاَّ تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوا وَصَمُّوا...

71. They thought there would be no trial (or punishment); so they became blind and deaf:

C781. That is, they turned away their eyes from Allah's Signs and they turned a deaf ear to Allah's Message.

... ثُمَّ تَابَ اللّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوا وَصَمُّوا كَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ ...

yet Allah (in mercy) turned to them: yet again many of them became blind and deaf.

... وَاللّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (٧١)

But Allah sees well all that they do.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ...

72. They do blaspheme who say: "Allah is Christ the son of Mary."

... وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ ...

But said Christ: "O children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord."

C782. Cf. Matt. 4:10, where Christ rebukes Satan for desiring the worship of other than Allah:

John 20:17, where Christ says to Mary Magdalene, "Go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.

"Cf. also Luke 18:19, where Christ rebukes a certain ruler for calling him Good Master: "Why callest thou me good? None is good, save One, that is, Allah."

In Mark 12:29 Jesus says: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear 0 Israel; the Lord our God is One Lord."

... إِنَّهُ مَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللّهُ عَلَيهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ...

Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode.

... وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنصَارٍ (٧٢)

There will for the wrongdoers be no one to help.

لَّقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُواْ إِنَّ اللّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلاَثَةٍ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَـهٍ إِلاَّ إِلَـهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

73. They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity:
for there is no god except One Allah.

... وَإِن لَّمْ يَنتَهُواْ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٧٣)

If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them.

أَفَلاَ يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٧٤)

74. Why turn they not to Allah, and seek His forgiveness?
For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

مَّا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلاَّ رَسُولٌ ...

75. Christ the son of Mary was no more than a Messenger;

... قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ...

many were the Messengers that passed away before him.

... وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ ...

His mother was a woman of truth.

C783. She never claimed that she was a mother of God, or that her son was God. She was a pious virtuous woman.

... كَانَا يَأْكُلاَنِ الطَّعَامَ ...

They had both to eat their (daily) food.

... انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الآيَاتِ ...

See how Allah doth makes His Signs clear to them;

C784. Note how logically the argument has led up from Jewish back-sliding and want of faith, to blasphemies associated with the names of Jesus and Mary, and in the following verses to the worship of senseless stocks and stones.

Allah is One; His Message is one; yet how people's perversity transforms truth into falsehood, religion into superstition!

... ثُمَّ انظُرْ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٧٥)

yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!

قُلْ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ مَا لاَ يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلاَ نَفْعًا...

76. Say:

Will ye worship, besides Allah, something which hath no power either to harm or benefit you?

... وَاللّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٧٦)

But Allah, He it is that heareth and knoweth all things."

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لاَ تَغْلُواْ فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ...

77. Say:

"O People of the Book! exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond the truth,

C785. Excess, as opposed to moderation and reason, is the simplest test by which a hypocrite or a selfish man who "trades" on religion, is known from a sincere, pious, and truly religious man.

Excess means that truth is sometimes concealed or trampled upon, that the fashions of ancestors or contemporaries are copied or overdone, and Allah's name is dishonoured by blasphemies or the setting up of false gods or fetishes, or that good (or even bad) men are deified and worshipped. The true path is the even path, the path of rectitude.

(Cf. 2:108, and 5:13).

... وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ أَهْوَاء قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّواْ مِن قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّواْ كَثِيرًا...

nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who misled many,

... وَضَلُّواْ عَن سَوَاء السَّبِيلِ (٧٧)

and strayed (themselves) from the even way.

لُعِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى لِسَانِ دَاوُودَ ...

78. Curses were pronounced on those among the Children of Israel who rejected faith, by the tongue of David.

C786. The Psalms of David have several passages of imprecations against the wicked.

Cf. Psalms 109:17-18; 78:21-22, "Therefore the Lord heard this and was wroth; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation";

Psalms 69:22-28, and Psalms 5:10.

... وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ...

and of Jesus the son of Mary:

C787. Cf. Matt. 23:33, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell?

also Matt. 12:34.

... ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوا وَّكَانُواْ يَعْتَدُونَ (٧٨)

because they disobeyed and persisted in excesses.

كَانُواْ لاَ يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَن مُّنكَرٍ فَعَلُوهُ...

79. Nor did they (usually) forbid one another the iniquities which they committed:

C788. There are bad men in every community, but if leaders connive at the misdeeds of the commonalty, - and even worse, if leaders themselves share in the misdeeds, as happened with the Pharisees and Scribes against whom Jesus spoke out, then that community is doomed.

... لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُواْ يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٩)

evil indeed were the deeds which they did.

تَرَى كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

80. Thou seest many of them turning in friendship to the unbelievers.

... لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لَهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ أَن سَخِطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِي الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ (٨٠)

Evil indeed are (the works) which their souls have sent forward before them (with the result), that Allah's wrath is on them, and in torment will they abide.

وَلَوْ كَانُوا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللهِ وَالنَّبِيِّ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَا اتَّخَذُوهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ...

81. If only they had believed in Allah, in the Prophet, and in what hath been revealed to him, never would they have taken them for friends and protectors,

... وَلَـٰكِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٨١)

but most of them are rebellious wrongdoers.

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا ...

82. Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans;

... وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَىٰ...

and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say: "We are Christians:"

C789. The meaning is not that they merely call themselves Christians, but that they were such sincere Christians that they appreciated Muslim virtues, as did the Abyssinians to whom Muslim refugees went during the persecution in Makkah. (R).

... ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيسِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا ...

because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world,

C790. Qissis: I have translated as "devoted to learning," following the Commentators. it seems to be a foreign word, possibly Abyssinian rather than Syriac, as the reference seems to be to the Abyssinian Christians.

Their real devotion to learning and the renunciation of the world by the Monastic Orders are contrasted with the hypocrisy and arrogance of the Pharisees and Scribes.

... وَأَنَّهُمْ لاَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٨٢)

and they are not arrogant.

... وَإِذَا سَمِعُواْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ ...

83. And when they listen to the revelation received by the Messenger,

... تَرَى أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُواْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ...

thou wilt see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognize the truth:

... يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٨٣)

they pray:

"Our Lord! we believe; write us down among the witnesses.

...وَمَا لَنَا لاَ نُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَمَا جَاءنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ

84. "What cause can we have not to believe in Allah and the truth which has come to us,

... وَنَطْمَعُ أَن يُدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصَّالِحِينَ (٨٤)

seeing that we long for our Lord to admit us to the company of the righteous?"

...فَأَثَابَهُمُ اللّهُ بِمَا قَالُواْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا

85. And for this their prayer hath Allah rewarded them with gardens, with rivers flowing underneath, their eternal home.

... وَذَلِكَ جَزَاء الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٨٥)

Such is the recompense of those who do good.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَكَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا أُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (٨٦)

86. But those who reject faith and belie our Signs, they shall be companions of Hell-fire.

C.74 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:87-108)

In the physical pleasures of life
The crime is excess; there is no merit
In abstention from things that are good
And lawful. Take no rash vows,
But to solemn oaths be faithful. Shun
As abominations drinking and gambling,
And superstitions of all kinds.
But be reverent to what is sacred
In rites and associations. Not the same
Are things good and things evil,
Learn to distinguish, but pry not
Into questions beyond your ken.
Guard your own souls in truth
And justice, and no harm can befall you.

Section 12

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لاَ تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللّهُ لَكُمْ وَلاَ تَعْتَدُوا...

87. O ye who believe!

make not unlawful the good things which Allah hath made lawful for you, but commit no excess:

C791. In pleasures that are good and lawful the crime is excess. There is no merit merely in abstention or asceticism, though the humility or unselfishness that may go with asceticism may have its value.

In 5:82, Christian monks are praised for particular virtues, though here and elsewhere monasticism is disapproved of.

Use Allah's gifts of all kinds with gratitude, but excess is not approved of by Allah.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (٨٧)

for Allah loveth not those given to excess.

وَكُلُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّهُ حَلاَلاً طَيِّبًا...

88. Eat of the things which Allah hath provided for you, lawful and good:

... وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ الَّذِيَ أَنتُم بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٨)

but fear Allah, in Whom ye believe.

لاَ يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَـكِن يُؤَاخِذُكُم بِمَا عَقَّدتُّمُ الأَيْمَانَ ...

89. Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths, but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths:

C792. Vows of penance or abstention may sometimes be futile, or even stand in the way of really good or virtuous act.

See 2:224-226, and notes 251, 252.

The general principles established are:

1. take no futile oaths;
2. use not Allah's name, literally or in intention, to fetter yourself against doing a lawful or good act:
3. keep to your solemn oaths to the utmost of your ability;
4. where you are unable to do so, expiate your failure by feeding or clothing the poor, or obtaining some one's freedom, or if you have not the means, by fasting. This is from a spiritual aspect.

If any party suffers damage from your failure, compensation will be due to him, but would be question of law or equity.

... فَكَفَّارَتُهُ ...

for expiation,

... إِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسَاكِينَ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ...

- feed then indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families;
- or clothe them;
- or give a slave his freedom.

... فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ...

- If that is beyond your means, fast for three days.

... ذَلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ وَاحْفَظُواْ أَيْمَانَكُمْ ...

That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn.

But keep to your oaths.

... كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٨٩)

Thus doth Allah make clear to you His Signs, that ye may be grateful.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ ...

90. O ye who believe!

- intoxicants and gambling,

C793. Cf. 2:219, and notes 240 and 241.

... وَالأنصَابُ ...

- (dedication of) stones,

C794. Cf. 5:3.

The stones there referred to were stone altars or stone columns on which oil was poured for consecration, or slabs on which meat was sacrificed to idols. Any idolatrous or superstitious practices are here condemned.

The **ansab** were objects of worship, and were common in Arabia before Islam.

See Renan, "History of Israel", Chapter 6, and Corpus *Inscriptionum Semiticarum*. Part 1. p. 154: Illustrations Nos. 123 and 123 *bis* are Phoenician columns of that kind, found in Malta.

... وَالأَزْلاَمُ ...

- and (divination by) arrows,

C795. Cf. 5:3.

The arrows there referred to were used for the division of meat by a sort of lottery or rate.

But arrows were also used for divination, i.e., for ascertaining lucky or unlucky moments, or learning the wishes of the heathen gods, as to whether men should undertake certain actions or not. All superstitions are condemned.

... رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ...

are an abomination, of Satan's handiwork:

... فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٩٠)

eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper.

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَن يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاء فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ...

91. Satan's plan is (but) to

- excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling,

... وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ اللّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلاَةِ ...

- and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer:

... فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّنتَهُونَ (٩١)

will ye not then abstain?

وَأَطِيعُواْ اللّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُواْ...

92. Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and beware (of evil):

C796. We are asked to obey the commands of Allah (which are always reasonable), instead of following superstitions (which are irrational), or seeking undue stimulation in intoxicants or undue advantage in gambling.

To some there may be temporary excitement or pleasure in these, but that is not the way either of prosperity or piety.

... فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلاَغُ الْمُبِينُ (٩٢)

if ye do turn back, know ye that it is Our Messenger's duty to proclaim (the Message) in the clearest manner.

C797. Cf. 5:67.

Both the worldly and the spiritual aspects of loss are pointed out.

Can Allah's Message do more?

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُواْ...

93. On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate (in the past),

... إِذَا مَا اتَّقَواْ وَّآمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَواْ وَّآمَنُواْ ثُمَّ اتَّقَواْ وَّأَحْسَنُواْ...

when they guard themselves from evil and believe, and do deeds of righteousness, (or) again, guard themselves from evil and do good.

... وَاللّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٩٣)

For Allah loveth those who do good.

C798. There is a subtle symphony in what appears at first sight to be a triple repetition. The relation of such simple regulations as those of food, or game, or the reverence due to a sacred place or sacred institution, has to be explained vis-à-vis man's higher duties.

Baydawi is right in classifying such duties under three heads;

- those due to Allah,
- those due from a man to himself (his self-respect), and
- those due to other creatures of Allah.

Or perhaps all duties have this threefold aspect.

- The first may be called Believing or Faith;
- the second, Guarding ourselves from evil, or Conscience: and
- the third, doing good or Righteousness.

But the simplest physical rules, e.g., those about eating, cleanliness, etc., if they are good, refer also to the higher aspects.

If we eat bad food, we hurt ourselves, we cause offence to our neighbors, and we disobey Allah.

If we have faith and righteousness, are we likely to be wanting in conscience?

If we have conscience and faith, are we likely to fail in righteousness?

If we have conscience and righteousness, what can be their foundation but faith?

All three manifest themselves in a willing obedience to Allah, and love for Him. We realise His love in loving and doing good to His creatures, and our love for Him is meaningless without such good.

Section 13

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ...

94. O ye who believe!

... لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّهُ مَن

يَخَافُهُ بِالْغَيْبِ...

Allah doth but make a trial of you in a little matter of game well within reach of your hands and your lances, that He may test who feareth Him unseen:

C799. Literally, "know" Cf. 3:166, and 3:154, n. 467.

Game is forbidden in the Sacred Precincts. If we deliberately break that injunction, we have no faith and reverence.

... فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٩٤)

any who transgress thereafter will have a grievous penalty.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَقْتُلُواْ الصَّيْدَ وَأَنتُمْ حُرُمٌ...

95. O ye who believe!

kill not game, while in the Sacred Precincts or in pilgrim garb.

C800. See 5:1, and n. 684.

The pilgrim garb, Ihram, has been explained in n. 212, 2:196.

... وَمَن قَتَلَهُ مِنكُم مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاء ...

If any of you doth so intentionally, the compensation is

... مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ هَدْيًا بَالِغَ

الْكَعْبَةِ...

- an offering, brought to the Ka'bah of a domestic animal equivalent to the one he killed, as adjudged by two just men among you;

C801. For an inadvertent breach of the game rule there is apparently no penalty. Intentional breach will be prevented, if possible, by previous action.

If in some case the preventive action is not effective, the penalty is prescribed. The penalty is in three alternatives:

- an equivalent animal should be brought to the Ka'bah for sacrifice; if so, the meat would be distributed to the poor; or the poor must be fed, with grain or money, according to the value of the animal if one had been sacrificed: or
- the offender must fast as many days as the number of the poor who would have been fed under the second alternative.
- Probably the last alternative would only be open if the offender is too poor to afford the first or second, but on this point Commentators are not agreed.

The "equivalent animal" in the first alternative would be a domestic animal of similar value or weight in meat or of similar shape (e.g., goat to antelope), as adjudged by two just men on the spot.

The alternatives about the penalty and its remission ("Allah forgives what is past") or exaction explain the last two lines of the verse: being "Exalted and Lord of Retribution", Allah can remit or regulate according to His just laws.

... أَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسَاكِينَ أو عَدْلُ ذَلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِ ...

- or by way of atonement, the feeding of the indigent;
- or its equivalent in fasts:

that he may taste of the penalty of his deed.

... عَفَا اللّهُ عَمَّا سَلَف...

Allah forgives what is past:

... وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنتَقِمُ اللّهُ مِنْهُ وَاللّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ (٩٥)

for repetition Allah will exact from him the penalty: for Allah is Exalted, and Lord of Retribution.

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ...

96. Lawful to you is the pursuit of water-game and its use for food, for the benefit of yourselves and those who travel;

C802. Water-game: i.e., game found in water, e.g., fish, etc.

"Water" includes sea, river, lake, pond, etc.

... وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا...

but forbidden is the pursuit of land-game: as long as ye are in the Sacred Precincts or in pilgrim garb.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٩٦)

And fear Allah, to whom ye shall be gathered back.

... جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِّلنَّاسِ

97. Allah made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, an asylum of security for men,

... وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ ...

as also the Sacred Months,

C803. The Sacred or Prohibited Months are explained in n. 209. 2:194, and n. 687, 5:2.

... وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقَلَائِدَ ...

the animals for offerings, and the garlands that mark them:

C804. See 5:2 and n. 688.

... ذَلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ ...

that ye may know that Allah hath knowledge of what is in the heavens and on earth

... وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٩٧)

and that Allah is well acquainted with all things.

C805. All sorts of people from all parts of the earth gather during the Pilgrimage. They must not think that they are strangers, that nobody knows them, and that they may behave as they like.

It is the House of Allah, and He has supreme knowledge of all things, of all thoughts, and all motives.

As the next verse says, while He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. He is also strict in enforcing respect for His ordinances.

اعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ...

98. Know ye that Allah is strict in punishment

... وَأَنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٩٨)

and that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

مَّا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلاَّ الْبَلاَغُ ...

99. The Messenger's duty is but to proclaim (the Message):

... وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ (٩٩)

but Allah knoweth all that ye reveal and ye conceal.

قُل لاَّ يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيثِ...

100. Say:

"Not equal are things that are bad and things that are good, even though the abundance of the bad may dazzle thee;

C806. Cf. 2:204.

People often judge by quantity rather than quality. They are dazzled by numbers: their hearts are captured by what they see everywhere around them. But the man of understanding and discrimination judges by a different standard. lie knows that good and bad things are not to be lumped together, and carefully chooses the best, which may be the scarcest, and avoids the bad, though evil may meet him at every step.

... فَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ يَا أُوْلِي الأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (١٠٠)

so fear Allah, O ye that understand! that (so) ye may prosper."

Section 14

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَسْأَلُواْ عَنْ أَشْيَاء إِن تُبْدَ لَكُمْ تَسُؤْكُمْ ...

101. O ye who believe!

ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble.

... وَإِن تَسْأَلُواْ عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْآنُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ ...

But if ye ask about things when the Qur'án is being revealed, they will be made plain to you:

C807. Many secrets are wisely hidden from us. If the future were known to us, we need not necessarily be happy.

In many cases we should be miserable. If the inner meaning of some of the things we see before our eyes were disclosed to us, it might cause a lot of mischief.

Allah's Message, in so far as it is necessary for shaping our conduct, is plain and open to us. But there are many things too deep for us to understand, either individually or collectively. It would be foolish to pry into them, as some people tried to do in the time of the Prophet.

Where a matter is mentioned in the Quran, we can reverently ask for its meaning. That is not forbidden. But we should never pass the bounds of

- our own capacity to understand,
- the time and occasion when we ask questions, and
- the part of the Universal Plan which it is Allah's purpose to reveal to us.

... عَفَا اللّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (١٠١)

Allah will forgive those: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْبَحُواْ بِهَا كَافِرِينَ (١٠٢)

102. Some people before you did ask such questions, and on that account lost their faith.

C808. For example, the merely fractious questions asked of Moses by the Jews: 2:68-71.

They showed that they had no faith. When foolish questions are asked, and there is no answer, it also shakes the faith of the foolish ones.

مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ ...

103. It was not Allah Who instituted (superstitions like those of)

C809. A number of Arab Pagan superstitions are referred to.

The Pagan mind, not understanding the hidden secrets of nature, attributed certain phenomena to divine anger and were assailed by superstitious fears which haunted their lives.

- If a she-camel or other female domestic animal had a large number of young, she (or one of her offspring) had her car slit and she was dedicated to a god: such an animal was a bahira.
- On return in safety from a journey, or on recovery from an illness a she-camel was similarly dedicated and let loose for free pasture: she was called a saiba.
- Where an animal bore twins, certain sacrifices or dedications were made to idols: an animal so dedicated was a wasila.
- A stallion-camel dedicated to the gods by certain rites was a ham.

The particular examples lead to the general truth: that superstition is due to ignorance, and is degrading to men and dishonouring to Allah.

... مِن بَحِيرَةٍ وَلَا سَآئِبَةٍ وَلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَلَا حَامٍ...

- a slit-ear she-camel,
- or a she-camel let loose for free pasture,
- or idol sacrifices for twin-births in animals,
- or stallion-camels freed from work;

... وَلَـكِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ الْكَذِبَ...

it is blasphemers who invent a lie against Allah,

... وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٠٣)

but most of them lack wisdom.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْاْ إِلَى مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ...

104. When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah hath revealed; come to the Messenger":

... قَالُواْ حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءنَا...

they say: "Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following."

C810. Cf. 2:170.

Where a Messenger of Truth comes to teach us the better way, it is foolish to say: "What our ancestors did is good enough for us."

... أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ (١٠٤)

What! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

105. O ye who believe!

... عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ لاَ يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ...

guard your own souls:

if ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray.

... إِلَى اللّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٠٥)

The goal of you all is to Allah:

it is He that will show you the truth of all that ye do.

C811. The unity of the one Judge will do perfect justice to each one's conduct, however different in form it may have appeared in this world.

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

106. O ye who believe!

... شَهَادَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ...

when death approaches any of you, (take) witnesses among yourselves

... حِينَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنَانِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ أَوْ آخَرَانِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ ...

when making bequests, two just men of your own (brotherhood) or others from outside

... إِنْ أَنتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ فَأَصَابَتْكُم مُّصِيبَةُ الْمَوْتِ ...

if ye are journeying through the earth, and the chance of death befalls you (thus).

... تَحْبِسُونَهُمَا مِن بَعْدِ الصَّلاَةِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللّهِ...

If ye doubt (their truth), detain them both after prayer, and let them both swear by Allah:

... إِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ لاَ نَشْتَرِي بِهِ ثَمَنًا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَى...

"We wish not in this for any worldly gain, even though the (beneficiary) be our near relation:

... وَلاَ نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللّهِ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّمِنَ الآثِمِينَ (١٠٦)

we shall hide not the evidence before Allah: if we do, then behold! the sin be upon us!"

C812. Ordinarily this oath should be decisive, and the matter must rest here.

But if it gets known that the oath was false, other evidence may be taken as in the next verse.

فَإِنْ عُثِرَ عَلَى أَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّا إِثْمًا ...

107. But if it gets known that these two were guilty of the sin (of perjury).

C813. Istahaqqa: Deserved having something (good or evil) attributed to one; hence the alternative meanings:

- committed or was guilty (of a sin):
- had or claimed a lawful right (to property).

The procedure was followed in an actual case in the Prophet's life-time.

A man from Madinah died abroad, having made over his goods, to two friends, to be delivered to his designated heirs in Madinah. They, however, kept back a valuable silver cup. When this was found out, oaths were taken from those who knew, and justice was done.

... فَآخَرَانِ يَقُومَانُ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الأَوْلَيَانِ...

Let two others stand forth in their places, nearest in kin from among those who claim a lawful right:

... فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ ...

let them swear by Allah:

... لَشَهَادَتُنَا أَحَقُّ مِن شَهَادَتِهِمَا وَمَا اعْتَدَيْنَا إِنَّا إِذًا لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٠٧)

"We affirm that our witness is truer than that of those two, and that we have not trespassed (beyond the truth): if we did, behold! the wrong be upon us!

... ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَن يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا ...

108. That is most suitable: that they may give the evidence in its true nature and shape,

... أَوْ يَخَافُوا أَن تُرَدَّ أَيْمَانٌ بَعْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ...

or else they would fear that other oaths would be taken after their oaths.

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْمَعُوا وَاللَّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (١٠٨)

But fear Allah, and listen (to His counsel):

for Allah guideth not a rebellious people.

C.75 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:109-120)

Jesus did feed his disciples by miracles,
But he claimed not divinity; he was
A true servant of Allah, to Whom doth belong
The dominion of the heavens and the earth'
Glory and Power are His, and His alone.

Section 15

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ...

109. One day will Allah gather the Messengers together, and ask:

"What was the response ye received (from men to your teaching)?

... قَالُوا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (١٠٩)

They will say:

"We have no knowledge: it is Thou who knowest in full all that is hidden."

C814. A scene of the Day of Reckoning is put before us in graphic words, showing the responsibility and the limitations of the Prophets of Allah, sent to preach His Message to men, with special reference to the Message of Jesus.

The Messengers are sent to preach the Truth. What fantastic forms the Message takes in men's reactions to it was beyond their knowledge, at the time, and beyond their responsibility. (R).

إِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى وَالِدَتِكَ...

110. Then will Allah say:

"O Jesus the son of Mary! recount My favor to thee and to thy mother.

C815. In a solemn scene before the Court of Judgment, Jesus is asked to recount all the mercies and favours shown to him, so that his followers should become ashamed of their ingratitude in corrupting that Message, when they could have done so much in profiting by its purity and spiritual truth.

This argument continues to the end of the Surah.

... إِذْ أَيَّدتُّكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ...

Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit,

C816. Cf. 2:87, and 3:62, n. 401.

... تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلاً...

so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity.

C817. Cf. 3:46, and n. 388.

... وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَاةَ وَالإِنجِيلَ...

Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel.

C818. Cf. 3:48.

... وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي ...

And behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave,

C819. Cf. 3:49, and n. 390.

... فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي...

and thou breathest into it, and it becometh a bird by My leave,

C820. Note how the words "by My leave" are repeated with each miracle to emphasize the fact that they arose, not out of the power or will of Jesus, but by the leave and will and power of Allah, who is supreme over Jesus as He is over all other mortals.

... وَتُبْرِىءُ الأَكْمَهَ وَالأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي ...

and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers by My leave.

... وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوتَى بِإِذْنِي ...

And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave.

... وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَنكَ ...

And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee

C821. The Jews were seeking to take the life of Jesus long before their final attempt to crucify him: see Luke 4:28-29.

Their attempt to crucify him was also foiled, according to the teaching we have received: 4:157.

... إِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنْهُمْ ...

when thou didst show them the Clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them, said:

... إِنْ هَـذَا إِلاَّ سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١١٠)

'This is nothing but evident magic'.

C822. According to Luke (11:15) when Christ performed the miracle of casting out devils the Jews said he did it through the chief of the devils. i.e., they accused him of black magic.

No such miracle of casting out devils is mentioned in the Quran. But Moses, Jesus and Muhammad were all accused of magic and sorcery, by those who could find no other explanation of Allah's power. (R).

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُواْ بِي وَبِرَسُولِي...

111. "And behold! I inspired the Disciples to have faith in Me and My Messenger:

... قَالُوَاْ آمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُونَ (١١١)

they said, 'We have faith, and do thou bear witness that we bow to Allah as Muslims.'"

C823. "Thou" refers to Jesus, who is being addressed by his Disciples. Cf. 3:52.

C824. Before or after Muhammad's life on this earth, all who bowed to Allah's Will were Muslims, and their religion is Islam.

Cf. 3:52, and n. 392.

إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ ...

112. Behold! the disciples said:

... يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيعُ رَبُّكَ أَن يُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ...

"O Jesus the son of Mary! can thy Lord send down to us a table set (with viands) from heaven?"

... قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١١٢)

Said Jesus: "Fear Allah, if ye have faith."

C825. The request of the Disciples savors a little of

1. want of faith,
2. too much attention to physical food, and
3. a childish desire for miracles or Signs.

All these three can be proved from the Canonical Gospels.

1. Simon Peter, quite early in the story, asked Jesus to depart from him, as he (Simon) was a sinful man (Luke 5:8).

   The same Peter afterwards denied his Master three times shamelessly when the Master was in the power of his enemies. And one of the Disciples (Judas) actually betrayed Jesus.

2. Even in the Canonical Gospels, so many of the miracles are concerned with food and drink, e.g.

   the turning of the water into wine (John, 2:1-11);

   the conversion of five loaves and two small fishes into food for 5,000 men (John 6:5-13), this being the only miracle recorded in all the four Gospels;

the miraculous number of fishes caught for food (Luke 5:4-11);

the cursing of the fig tree because it had no fruit (Matt. 21:18-19);

the allegory of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:53-57).

3. Because the Samaritans would not receive Jesus into their village, the Disciples James and John wanted a fire to come down from heaven and consume them (Luke 9:54).

قَالُواْ نُرِيدُ أَن نَّأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُنَا...

113. They said: "We only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts,

... وَنَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُونَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (١١٣)

and to know that thou hast indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle."

قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ...

114. Said Jesus the son of Mary:

... اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا أَنزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ...

"O Allah our Lord! send us from heaven a table set (with viands), that there may be for us --

C826. The words of the Prayer seem to suggest the Last Supper.

Cf. also the vision of Peter in "The Acts of the Apostles." 10:9-16.

... تَكُونُ لَنَا عِيداً لِّأَوَّلِنَا وَآخِرِنَا وَآيَةً مِّنكَ...

for the first and the last of us -- a solemn festival and a sign from Thee;

... وَارْزُقْنَا وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (١١٤)

and provide for our sustenance, for Thou art the best Sustainer (of our needs)."

C827. As in Islam, so in Christ's Prayer, sustenance should be taken for both physical and spiritual strength, especially the latter.

"Give us this day our daily bread" seems the rendering of a literalist whose attention was fixed too much on bread.

قَالَ اللّهُ إِنِّي مُنَزِّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ ...

115. Allah said: "I will send it down unto you:

... فَمَن يَكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنكُمْ فَإِنِّي أُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا لاَّ أُعَذِّبُهُ أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (١١٥)

but if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on anyone among all the peoples."

C828. It is a wicked generation that asks for Signs and Miracles. Usually they are not vouchsafed. But where they are, the responsibility of those who ask for them is increased. If, after that, they reject faith, invent lies, and go after false gods or false ideals, their penalty will be worse than that of other people.

How this works out practically among those who call themselves Christians is exemplified in such books as the late Mr. W.T. Stead's "If Christ Came to Chicago?"

Section 16

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ...

116. And behold! Allah will say "O Jesus the son of Mary!

... أأَنتَ قُلتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلـهَيْنِ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ...

didst thou say unto men, 'worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah'?"

... قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقٍّ...

He will say:

"Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say).

... إِن كُنتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ ...

Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it.

... تَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلاَ أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ...

Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine.

... إِنَّكَ أَنتَ عَلاَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ (١١٦)

For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden.

C829. Jesus disclaims here any knowledge of the sort of things that are attributed to him by those who take his name.

The worship of Mary, though repudiated by the Protestants, was widely spread in the earlier churches, both in the East and the West.

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلاَّ مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنِ اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ...

117. "Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit,

'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord';

C830. Cf. 5:72 and n. 782.

... وَكُنتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ...

and I was a witness over them whilst I dwelt amongst them;

... فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنتَ أَنتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

when Thou didst take me up, Thou wast the Watcher over them,

... وَأَنتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (١١٧)

and Thou art a Witness to all things.

C831. Jesus here acknowledges that he was mortal, and that his knowledge was limited like that of a mortal.

إِن تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ...

118. "If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servants:

... وَإِن تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١١٨)

if Thou dost forgive them, Thou art the Exalted, the Wise."

C832. A Master can justly punish His servants for disobedience: no one can say Him nay, for He is high

above all. But if He chooses to forgive. He in His wisdom sees things that we mortals cannot see.

This is the limit of intercession that men of God can make on behalf of sinners.

قَالَ اللّهُ هَذَا يَوْمُ يَنفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ ...

119. Allah will say: "This is a day on which the truthful will profit from their truth:

... لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

theirs are Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, their eternal home:

... رَّضِيَ اللّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُواْ عَنْهُ ...

Allah well-pleased with them, and they with Allah:

... ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١١٩)

that is the great Salvation, (the fulfillment of all desires)."

C833. Fauz: Felicity, happiness, achievement, salvation, the attainment or fulfilment of desires.

What a beautiful definition of salvation or the end of life! -that we should win Allah's good pleasure and that we should reach the stage at which His good pleasure is all-in-all to us.

لِلّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا فِيهِنَّ ...

120. To Allah doth belong the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein,

... وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٢٠)

and it is He who hath power over all things.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَالنُّورَ

Praise be to Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and made the darkness and the light.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

An'am

الأنعام

Introduction and Summary

This is a Surah of the late Makkan period. The greater part of it was revealed entire. Its place in the traditional order of arrangement is justified by logical considerations. We have already had the spiritual history of mankind, a discussion of the earlier revelations and how they were lost or corrupted, the regulations for the outer life of the new community, and the points in which the Jews and Christians failed to maintain the central doctrine of Islam-the unity of Allah. The next step now taken is to expound this doctrine in relation to Pagan Arabia.

Summary- The nature of Allah and the method by which He reveals Himself are first expounded, and the weakness of Paganism is exposed (6:1-30, and C. 76).

The emptiness of this world's life is contrasted with the evidence of Allah's wonderful handiwork in all Creation. It is He who holds the keys of the Unseen and secrets of all that we see (6:32-60, and C. 77).

Allah's working in His world and His constant care and guidance should give a clue to His unity as it did to Abraham when he argued with those who worshipped false gods (6:61-82, and C. 78).

The succession of prophets after Abraham kept Allah's truth alive, and led up to the Quran. How can man fail to understand the majesty and goodness of Allah, when he contemplates Allah's creation and the Messages to mankind? (6:83-110, and C. 79).

The obstinate and the rebellious are deceived; they should be avoided. Though they turn for assistance to each other, they will receive due punishment (6:111-129, and C. 80).

Allah's decree will come to pass, in spite of all the crimes and superstitions of the ungodly (6:130-150, and C. 81).

The better course is to follow the straight Way, the Way of Allah, as directed in the Quran, with unity and the full dedication of our lives (6:151-165, and C. 82). (R).

C.76 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:1-30)

Allah did separate Light and Darkness;
He reigns not only in heaven but also
On earth; Mercy is His Law;
To Him shall we all return

At the end of all things. How can we
Then depart from truth and forge lies
Against Him? It is folly to say that there is
Nothing beyond this our present life.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَالنُّورَ...

1. Praise be to Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and made the darkness and the light.

ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِرَبِّهِم يَعْدِلُونَ (١)...

Yet those who reject Faith hold (others) as equal with their Guardian-Lord.

C834. Adaia has various meanings:

1. to hold something as equal to something else, as here; to balance nicely;
2. to deal justly, as between one party and another, 42:15;
3. to give compensation or reparation, or something as equivalent to something else, 6:70;
4. to turn the balance the right way, to give a right disposition, to give a just bias or proportion, 82:7;
5. to turn the balance the wrong way, to swerve, to show bias, 4:135.

C835. The argument is threefold:

1. Allah created everything you see and know: how can you then set up any of His own creatures as equal to Him?
2. He is your own Guardian-Lord; He cherishes and loves you: how can you be so ungrateful as to run after something else?

3. Darkness and Light are to help you to distinguish between the true from the false: how then can you confound the true God with your false ideas and superstitions?

   There may also be a repudiation of the Duality of old Persian theology; Light and Darkness are not conflicting Powers; they are both creatures of Allah.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن طِينٍ ...

2. He it is who created you from clay,

C836. After the general argument, the argument comes to man personally.

Can such a miserable creature, created from clay, put himself in opposition to his Creator?

And can man forget or doubt that his is here only for a short term of probation?

And then, after a period, comes the Day of Account before Allah.

... ثُمَّ قَضَى أَجَلاً...

and then decreed a stated term (for you).

C837. This life is a period of probation. The other term leads up to Judgement.

...وَأَجَلٌ مُّسمًّى عِندَهُ ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ (٢)

And there is in His presence another determined term;

yet ye doubt within yourselves!

وَهُوَ اللّهُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَفِي الأَرْضِ ...

3. And He is Allah in the heavens and on earth.

...يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَجَهرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُونَ (٣)

He knoweth what ye hide, and what ye reveal,

and He knoweth the (recompense) which ye earn (by your deeds).

C838. It is folly to suppose that God only reigns in the heavens. He also reigns on earth. He knows all our secret thoughts and motives, and the real worth of all that is behind what we care to show.

It is by our deeds that He judges us; for our deeds, whether good or evil we shall get due recompense in due time.

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِم مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلاَّ كَانُواْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ (٤)

4. But never did a single one of the Signs of their Lord reach them, but they turned away therefrom.

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُواْ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ...

5. And now they reject the truth when it reaches them:

...فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنبَاء مَا كَانُواْ بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (٥)

but soon shall they learn the reality of what they used to mock at.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْاْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم ...

6. See they not how many of those before them We did destroy?

C839. Now comes the argument from history, looking backwards and forwards.

If we are so short-sighted or arrogant as to suppose that we are firmly established on this earth, secure in our privileges, we are reminded of much greater nations in the past, who failed in their duty and ere wiped out. In their fate we must read our own fate, if we fail likewise! But those without faith, instead of facing facts squarely "turn away therefrom."

... مِّن قَرْنٍ مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ مَا لَمْ نُمَكِّن لَّكُمْ...

Generations We had established on the earth, in strength such as We have not given to you,

وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاء عَلَيْهِم مِّدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا الأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهِمْ ...

for whom We poured out rain from the skies in abundance, and gave (fertile) streams flowing beneath their (feet):

... فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ...

yet for their sins We destroyed them,

...وَأَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ (٦)

and raised in their wake fresh generations (to succeed them).

... وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ

7. If We had sent unto thee a written (Message) on parchment,

C839a. Qirtas: in the Prophet's life, could only mean "parchment," which was commonly used as writing material in Western Asia from the 2nd century B.C.

The word was derived from the Greek, Charles (Cf. Latin, "Charta:). Paper, as we know it, made from rags, was first used by the Arabs after the conquest of Samarqand in 751 A.D.

The Chinese had used it by the 2nd century B.C. The Arabs introduced it into Europe it was; used in Greece in the 11th and 12th century, and in Spain through Sicily in the 12th century.

The Papyrus, made from an Egyptian reed, was in Egypt as early as 2500 B.C. It gave place to paper in Egypt in the 10th century.

... فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

so that they could touch it with their hands, the unbelievers would have been sure to say:

...إِنْ هَـذَا إِلاَّ سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧)

"This is nothing but obvious magic!"

C840. The materialists want to see actual physical material things before them, but if such a thing came from an unusual source or expressed things they cannot understand, they give it some name like magic, or superstition, or whatever name is in fashion, and they are not helped at all in attaining faith, because their "hearts are diseased" (2:10)

وَقَالُواْ لَوْلا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ...

8. They say: "Why is not an angel sent down to him?"

... وَلَوْ أَنزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِيَ الأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لاَ يُنظَرُونَ (٨)

If We did send down an angel, the matter would be settled at once, and no respite would be granted them.

C841. Cf. 2::210.

An angel is a heavenly being, a manifestation of Allah's glory, invisible to men who live gross material lives; Such men are given plenty of respite in which to turn in repentance to Allah and make themselves worthy of His light.

But if their prayer to see an angel were grated, it would do them no good, for thy would be destroyed as darkness is destroyed by light.

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَّجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلاً وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّا يَلْبِسُونَ (٩)

9. If We had made it an angel, We should have sent him as a man, and We should certainly have caused them confusion in a matter which they have already covered with confusion.

C842. Supposing an angel should appear to their grosser senses, he could only do it in human form. In that case their present confused notions about spiritual life would be still more confounded.

They would say: "We wanted to see an angel, and we have only seen a man!"

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِىءَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ...

10. Mocked were (many) Messengers before thee;

...فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُواْ مِنْهُم مَّا كَانُواْ بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (١٠)

but the scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked.

C843. "The scoffers were mocked by the thing that they mocked" would express epigrammatically part of the sense, but not the whole.

"Hemmed in" implies that the logic of events turned the tables, and as a man might be besieged and

surrounded by an enemy in war, and would be forced to surrender, so these mockers will find that events would justify Truth, not them.

The mockers of Jesus, - where were they when Titus destroyed Jerusalem?

The mockers who drove out Muhammad from Makkah, - what was their plight when Muhammad came back in triumph and they sued for mercy, - and he gave it to them!

According to the Latin proverb, Great is Truth, and must prevail.

Section 2

قُلْ سِيرُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُواْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١١)

11. Say: "Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected truth."

قُل لِّمَن مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

12. Say: "To whom belongeth all that is in the heavens and on earth?"

قُل لِلّهِ...

Say:

"To Allah.

... كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

He hath inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy

C844. History, travel, human experience, all proves the Mercy of Allah and the law that without it those who reject Truth tend to lose their own souls and destroy themselves.

... لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

that He will gather you together for the Day of Judgment, there is no doubt whatever.

...الَّذِينَ خَسِرُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٢)

It is they who have lost their own souls, that will not believe.

وَلَهُ مَا سَكَنَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ...

13. "To Him belongeth all that dwelleth (or lurketh) in the night and the day.

C845. Sakan:

- to dwell;
- to rest, to be still, to stop (moving), to lurk;
- to be quiescent, as a letter which is not moved with a vowel.

If we imagine Night and Day to be places, and each to have (dwelling in them) things that are open and things that are concealed, things that move and things that are still, things that are sounded and things that are quiescent, we get some idea of the imagery implied.

The mystery of Time (which seems more abstract than Space) is thus explained and illustrated by the idea of Place or Space, which also is a notion and not a concrete thing.

But He Who has control of all these things is the one true Allah.

... وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٣)

For He is the One Who heareth and knoweth all things.

C846. Throughout this section we have a sort of implied dialogue, of which one part is understood from the other part, which is expressed.

In verse 11, we might have an imagery objector saying: "Why go back to the past?"

The answer is:

> "Well, travel through the world, and see whether it is not true that virtue and godliness exalt a nation, and the opposite are causes of ruin. Both the past and the present prove this."

In verse 12 the objector may say: "But you speak of God's power?"

The man of God replies:

> "Yes, but Mercy is Allah's own attribute and knowledge and wisdom beyond what man can conceive."

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللّهِ أَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا...

14. Say:

"Shall I take for my protector any other than Allah,

فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلاَ يُطْعَمُ ...

the Maker of the heavens and the earth?

And He is that feedeth but is not fed."

C847. Feedeth but is not fed: true both literally and figuratively.

To God we owe the satisfaction of all needs, but He is independent of all needs.

...قُلْ إِنِّيَ أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٤)

Say:

"Nay! but I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah (in Islam), and be not thou of the company of those who join gods with Allah."

قُلْ إِنِّيَ أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٥)

15. Say:

"I would, if I disobeyed my Lord, indeed have fear of the penalty of a Mighty Day.

مَّن يُصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ (١٦)

16. "On that day, if the penalty is averted from any, it is due to Allah's Mercy;

and that would be (Salvation), the obvious fulfillment of all desire.

C848. We continue the implied dialogue suggested in n 846.

In verse 14, the objector might say: "But we have other interests in life than religion and Allah."

"No," says the man of God,

> "My Creator is the one and only Power whose protection I seek; and I strive to be first in the race."

In verse 15, the objector suggests: "enjoy the good things of this life; it is short."

The answer is:

> "The Hereafter is more real to me, and promises the true fulfilment of all desire; happiness or affliction comes not from the fleeting pettinesses or illusions of this life, but from the power and wisdom of Allah."

In verse 19, the objector makes his final splash: "What evidence is there for all this?"

The reply is:

> "I know it is true, for Allah's voice is within me, and my living Teacher awakens that voice; and there is the Book of Inspiration. Allah is one, and there is none other besides."

وَإِن يَمْسَسْكَ اللّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلاَ كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلاَّ هُوَ...

17. "If Allah touch thee with affliction, none can remove it but He;

...وَإِن يَمْسَسْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدُيرٌ (١٧)

if He touch thee with happiness, He hath power over all things.

C849. The vulgar worship of false gods out of fear that they would harm them or hope that they would confer some benefit on them. These false gods can do neither.

All power, all goodness is in the hands of Allah. All else is pretence or illusion.

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ (١٨)

18. "He is the Irresistible, (watching) from above over His worshippers;

and He is the Wise, acquainted with all things."

قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً...

19. Say: "What thing is most weighty in evidence?"

...قُلِ اللّهِ شَهِيدٌ بِيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ...

Say: "Allah is Witness between me and you:

...وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لأُنذِرَكُم بِهِ وَمَن بَلَغَ...

this Qur'án hath been revealed to me by inspiration that I may warn you and all whom it reaches.

...أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللّهِ آلِهَةً أُخْرَى...

Can ye possibly bear witness that besides Allah there is another god?"

...قُل لاَّ أَشْهَدُ...

Say: "Nay! I cannot bear witness!"

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَـهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّنِي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (١٩)

Say: "But in truth He is the One Allah, and I truly am innocent of (your blasphemy of) joining others with Him.

Section 3

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءهُمُ...

20. Those to whom We have given the Book know this as they know their own sons.

C850. Cf. 2:146 and n. 151.

In both passages the pronoun translated "this" may mean "him" and refer to Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, as some commentators think.

...الَّذِينَ خَسِرُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٠)

Those who have lost their own souls refuse therefore to believe.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ...

21. Who doth more wrong than he who inventeth a lie against Allah or rejecteth His Signs?

...إِنَّهُ لاَ يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢١)

But verily the wrongdoers never shall prosper.

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُواْ ...

22. One day shall We gather them all together: We shall say to those who ascribed partners (to Us):

... أَيْنَ شُرَكَآؤُكُمُ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ (٢٢)

"Where are the partners whom ye (invented and) talked about?"

ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُن فِتْنَتُهُمْ إِلاَّ أَن قَالُواْ ...

23. There will then be (left) no subterfuge for them but to say:

C851. Fitnah has various meanings, from the root idea of "to try , to test, to tempt;" e.g.

- a trial or temptation, as in 2:102;
- trouble, tumult, oppression, persecution, as in 2:191, 193, 217;
- discord, as in 3:7;
- subterfuge, an answer that amounts to a sedition, and excuse founded on a falsehood, as here.

Other shades of meaning will be noticed as they occur.

Those who blasphemed Allah in imagining false gods will now se the vanity of their imaginations for themselves.

What answer can they give now?

In their perversity they will deny that they ever entertained the notion of false gods.

... وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ (٢٣)

"By Allah, Our Lord, we were not those who joined gods with Allah."

انظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُواْ عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ (٢٤)

24. Behold! how they lie against their own souls!

But the (lie) which they invented will leave them in the lurch.

C852. The lies which they used to tell have now "wandered" from the channels which they use to occupy, and left the liars in the lurch. In denying the indubitable fact that they took false gods, they admit the falsity of their notions and thus are practically convicted out of their own mouths.

وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ...

25. Of them there are some who (pretend to) listen to thee;

...وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَن يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا...

but We have thrown veils on their hearts, so they understand it not, and deafness in their ears;

C852a. It: The Quran.

...وَإِن يَرَوْاْ كُلَّ آيَةٍ لاَّ يُؤْمِنُواْ بِهَا...

if they saw every one of the Signs, not they will believe in them;

...حَتَّى إِذَا جَآؤُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ إِنْ هَذَآ إِلاَّ أَسَاطِيرُ

الأَوَّلِينَ (٢٥)

in so much that when they come to thee, they (but) dispute with thee;

the unbelievers say: "These are nothing but tales of the ancients."

وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْأَوْنَ عَنْهُ ...

26. Others they keep away from it, and themselves they keep away;

...وَإِن يُهْلِكُونَ إِلاَّ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٦)

but they only destroy their own souls, and they perceive it not.

وَلَوْ تَرَىَ إِذْ وُقِفُواْ عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُواْ...

27. If thou couldst but see when they are confronted with the fire! They will say:

...يَا لَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَلاَ نُكَذِّبَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٧)

"Would that we were but sent back! then would we not reject the Signs of our Lord,

but would be amongst those who believe!

بَلْ بَدَا لَهُم مَّا كَانُواْ يُخْفُونَ مِن قَبْلُ...

28. Yea, in their own (eyes) will become manifest what before they concealed,

...وَلَوْ رُدُّواْ لَعَادُواْ لِمَا نُهُواْ عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (٢٨)

but if they were returned, they would certainly relapse to the things they were forbidden, for they are indeed liars.

C853. Their falsity was not due to want of knowledge, but to perversity and selfishness. In their heart was a disease (2:10): therefore neither their understanding, nor their ears, nor their eyes do their proper work. They twist what they see, hear, or are taught, and go deeper and deeper into the mire.

The deceptions which they used to practice on other people will, before the Seat of Judgement, become clear in their own eyes.

وَقَالُواْ إِنْ هِيَ إِلاَّ حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ (٢٩)

29. And they (sometimes) say:

"There is nothing except our life on this earth, and never shall we be raised up again."

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ وُقِفُواْ عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ...

30. If thou couldst but see when they are confronted with their Lord!

...قَالَ أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ...

He will say: "Is not this the truth?"

...قَالُواْ بَلَى وَرَبِّنَا...

They will say: "Yea, by our Lord!"

...قَالَ فَذُوقُواْ الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٣٠)

He will say: "Taste ye then the penalty, because ye rejected faith."

C.77 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose) (6:31-60)

The life of this world is but empty;
What is serious is the life hereafter.
The teacher of Allah's truth is not baulked
By frivolous objections or insults
Or persecution. The wicked will be
Cut off to the last remnant. Allah's wisdom
Pervades the whole of His Creation,
And in His hands are the keys of the Unseen,
And the secrets of all that we see.

Section 4

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِلِقَاء اللّهِ...

31. Lost indeed are they who treat it as a falsehood that they must meet Allah,

...حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءتْهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُواْ يَا حَسْرَتَنَا عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيهَا...

until on a sudden the hour is on them, and they say: "Ah! woe unto us that we took no thought of it;"

...وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَى ظُهُورِهِمْ ...

for they bear their burdens on their backs;

C854. Grievous is the burden of sins which the wicked will bear on their backs when they become conscious of them.

Some commentators personify Sins as ugly Demons riding on the backs of men, while the men's Good Deeds become the strong and patient mounts which will carry the men on their backs. If the Good Deeds are few and the Sins many, the man and his Good Deeds will be crushed under the load of the Evil which they carry.

...أَلاَ سَاء مَا يَزِرُونَ (٣١)

and evil indeed are the burdens that they bear!

...وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلاَّ لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ

32. What is the life of this world but play and amusement?

C855. Play and amusement are for preparing our minds for the serious things of life: in themselves they are not serious.

So this life is a preparation for the Eternal Home to which we are going, which is far more important than the ephemeral pleasures which may possibly seduce us in this life.

...وَلَلدَّارُ الآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (٣٢)

But best is the home in the Hereafter, for those who are righteous.

Will ye not then understand?

...قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ

33. We know indeed the grief which their words do cause thee:

...فَإِنَّهُمْ لاَ يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ (٣٣)

it is not thee they reject: it is the Signs of Allah, which the wicked condemn.

وَلَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَى مَا كُذِّبُوا وَأُوذُوا حَتَّى أَتَاهُمْ نَصْرُنَا...

34. Rejected were the Messengers before thee:

with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until Our aid did reach them:

...وَلاَ مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللّهِ وَلَقَدْ جَاءكَ مِن نَّبَإِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٣٤)

there is none that can alter the Words (and Decrees) of Allah.

Already hast thou received some account of those Messengers.

وَإِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ...

35. If their spurning is hard on thy mind,

...فَإِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَن تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الأَرْضِ أَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي السَّمَاء فَتَأْتِيَهُم بِآيَةٍ...

yet if thou wert able to seek a tunnel in the ground or a ladder to the skies and bring them a Sign, (what good?).

C856. There were many signs of a divine Mission in the Prophet's life and in the Message which he delivered. If these did not convince the Unbelievers, was it not vain to seek a miraculous Sign from the bowels of the earth or by a visible ascent to the skies?

If in the Prophet's eagerness to get all to accept his Message he was hurt at their callousness, active opposition, and persecution of him, he is told that a full knowledge of the working of Allah's Plan would convince him that impatience was misplaced. This was in the days of persecution before the Hijrah. The history in Madinah and after shows how Allah's truth was ultimately and triumphantly vindicated. Who among the sincere devotees of Muhammad can fail to read 6:33-35 without tears in his eyes?

...وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَى فَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (٣٥)

If it were Allah's will, He could gather them together unto true guidance:

so be not thou amongst those who are swayed by ignorance (and impatience)!

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ ...

36. Those who listen (in truth), be sure, will accept:

C857. There is a double meaning here.

- If people listen to truth sincerely and earnestly, they must believe; even if the spiritual faculty is dead, Allah will by His grace revive it and they will come to Him, if they really try earnestly to understand.
- The sincere will believe; but those whose hearts are dead will not listen, yet they cannot escape being brought to the Judgement Seat before Him.

... وَالْمَوْتَى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ (٣٦)

as to the dead, Allah will raise them up: then will they be turned unto Him.

وَقَالُواْ لَوْلاَ نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ...

37. They say: "Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord?"

...قُلْ إِنَّ اللّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَن يُنَزِّلَ آيَةً وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٧)

Say: "Allah hath certainly power to send down a Sign: but most of them understand not."

C858. Signs are all around them, but they do not understand. If they want a particular Sign to suit their gross ignorance, they will not be humored, for they can always pick holes in anything that descends to their level.

وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ فِي الأَرْضِ وَلاَ طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلاَّ أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُم ...

38. There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you.

C859. "Animals living on the earth" include those living in the water-fishes, reptiles, crustaceans, insects, as well as four-footed beasts. Life on the wing is separately mentioned.

"Tair," which is ordinarily translated as "bird," is anything that flies, including mammals like bats.

In our pride we may exclude animals from our purview, but they live a life, social ad individual, like ourselves, and all life is subject to the Plan and Will of Allah.

In 6:59 we are told that not a leaf falls but by His Will, and things dry and green are recorded in His Book. In other words they all obey His archetypal Plan, the Book which is also mentioned here.

They are all answerable in their several degrees to His Plan ("shall be gathered to their Lord in the end"). This is not Pantheism: it is ascribing all life, activity, and existence to the Will and Plan of Allah.

...مَّا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الكِتَابِ مِن شَيْءٍ ...

Nothing have We omitted from the Book,

... ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ (٣٨)

and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end.

...وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا صُمٌّ وَبُكْمٌ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ...

39. Those who reject Our Signs are deaf and dumb, in the midst of darkness profound:

C860. The limited free will of man makes a little difference. If he sees the Signs but shuts his ears to the true Message, and refuses (like a dumb thing) to speak out the Message which all Nature proclaims, then according to the Plan (of his limited free-will) he must suffer and wander, just as, in the opposite case, he will receive grace and salvation.

...مَن يَشَإِ اللّهُ يُضْلِلْهُ وَمَن يَشَأْ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٣٩)

whom Allah willeth, He leaveth to wander,

whom He willeth, He placeth on the way that is straight.

...قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُكُم إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ

40. Say: "Think ye to yourselves, if there come upon you the wrath of Allah, or the hour (that ye dread),

أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٠)...

would ye then call upon other than Allah?

(Reply) if ye are truthful!"

بَلْ إِيَّاهُ تَدْعُونَ فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنْ شَاءَ...

41. "Nay, On Him would ye call, and if it be His Will, He would remove (the distress) which occasioned your call upon Him,

وَتَنسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ (٤١)...

and ye would forget (the false gods) which ye join with Him!"

Section 5

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ ...

42. Before thee We sent (Messengers) to many nations

فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاء وَالضَّرَّاء لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ (٤٢)...

and We afflicted the nations with suffering and adversity, that they might learn humility.

فَلَوْلا إِذْ جَاءهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُواْ...

43. When the suffering reached them from Us, why then did they not learn humility?

C861. Sorrow and suffering may (if we take them rightly) turn out to be the best gifts of Allah to us. According to the Psalms (94:12), "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord!"

Through suffering we learn humility, the antidote to many vices and the fountain of many virtues. But if we take them the wrong way, we grumble and complain: we become faint-hearted; and Satan gets his opportunity to exploit us by putting forward the alluring pleasures of his Vanity Fair.

وَلَـكِن قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (٤٣)...

On the contrary their hearts became hardened, and Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them.

فَلَمَّا نَسُواْ مَا ذُكِّرُواْ بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

44. But when they forget the warning they had received, We opened to them the gates of all (good) things,

C862. Learning the inner truth of ourselves and the world presupposes a certain advanced stage of sensitiveness and spiritual development. There is a shallower stage, at which prosperity and the good things of life may teach us sympathy and goodness and cheerfulness like that of Mr. Cheeribyles in Dickens. In such cases the Message takes root. But there is another type of character which is puffed up in prosperity.

For them prosperity is a trial or even a punishment from the higher point of view. They go deeper and deeper into sin, until they are pulled up of a sudden, and then instead of being contrite they merely become desperate.

...حَتَّى إِذَا فَرِحُواْ بِمَا أُوتُواْ أَخَذْنَاهُم بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْلِسُونَ (٤٤)

until, in the midst of their enjoyment of Our gifts, on a sudden, We called them to account, when lo! they were plunged in despair!

فَقُطِعَ دَابِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ...

45. Of the wrongdoers the last remnant was cut off.

...وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٥)

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds.

C863. Allah's punishment of wrong-doers is a measure of justice, to protect the true and righteous from their depredations and maintain His righteous decrees. It is an aspect of His character which is emphasised by the epithet "Cherisher of the Worlds".

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُم ...

46. Say:

"Think ye, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight, and sealed up your hearts,

C864. Cf. 2:7 and notes.

...مَّنْ إِلَـهٌ غَيْرُ اللّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ ...

who -- a god other than Allah -- could restore them to you?"

...انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُونَ (٤٦)

See how We explain the Signs by various (symbols):

Yet they turn aside.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ إِلاَّ الْقَوْمُ

الظَّالِمُونَ (٤٧)

47. Say: "Think ye, if the punishment of Allah comes to you, whether suddenly or openly, will any be destroyed except those who do wrong?"

C865. Suddenly: without warning.

Openly: with many warnings, even to the sinners, though they heed them not.

As to those who understand and read the signs of God, they could always tell that all wrong-doing must eventually have it punishment. But it will affect the wrong-doers, not the righteous. It is justice, not revenge.

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلاَّ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ...

48. We send the Messengers only to give good news and to warn:

C866. The Prophets are not sent to cancel man's limited free-will. They are sent to preach and teach,

- to preach hope to the repentant ("good news"), and
- to warn the rebellious of the Wrath to come.

...فَمَنْ آمَنَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٤٨)

so those who believe and mend (their lives), upon them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْسُقُونَ (٤٩)

49. But those who reject Our Signs, them shall our punishment touch, for that they ceased not from transgressing.

قُل لاَّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِندِي خَزَآئِنُ اللّهِ ...

50. Say: "I tell you not that with me are the treasures of Allah,

C867. Literally it might mean that the men of God are not like vulgar soothsayers, who pretend to reveal hidden treasures, or peer into future, or claim to be something of a different nature from men. But the meaning is wider:

- They deal out Allah's great treasures of truth, but the treasures are not theirs, but Allah's;
- they have greater insight into the higher things, but that insight is not due to their own wisdom, but to Allah's inspiration,;
- they are of the same flesh and blood with us, and the sublimity of their words and teaching arises through Allah's grace- to them and to those who hear them.

... وَلا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ ...

nor do I know what is hidden,

... وَلا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ...

nor do I tell you I am an angel.

...إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلاَّ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيَّ...

I but follow what is revealed to me."

... قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ

Say: "Can the blind be held equal to the seeing?"

C868. Therefore compare not the men of God ("the seeing") with ordinary men ("the blind").

The men of God, although they be but men, have the higher light with them; therefore do not exact of them petty ephemeral services. Though they are men, they are not as other men, and are entitled to reverence.

... أَفَلاَ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٥٠)

Will ye then consider not?

Section 6

وَأَنذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَن يُحْشَرُوا إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ...

51. Give the warning to those in whose (hearts) is the fear that they will be brought (to judgment) before their Lord:

C869. There are some men - sinners - who yet believe in Judgement; let them be warned of their personal responsibility to guard against evil; let then not rely upon protectors or intercessors before Allah; their sins can only be forgiven by Allah's own Mercy.

...لَيْسَ لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٥١)

except from Him they will have no protector nor intercessor: that they may guard (against evil).

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ...

52. Send not away those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face.

C870. Face: wajh: see 2:112 and n. 114.

...مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ...

Naught have they to gain from thee, and naught hast thou to gain from them,

C871. Some of the rich and influential Quraish thought it beneath their dignity to listen to Muhammad's teaching in company with the lowly disciples, who were gathered round him. But he refused to send away these lowly disciples, who were sincere seekers after Allah.

From a worldly point of view they had nothing to gain from them as they had no influence. But that was no reason for turning them away; indeed their true sincerity entitled them to precedence over worldly men in the kingdom of God, whose justice was vindicated in Muhammad's daily life in this as in other things. If their sincerity was in any way doubtful, it involved no responsibility for the Preacher.

...فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥٢)

that thou shouldst turn them away, and thus be (one) of the unjust.

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُولُوا أَهَٰؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّن بَيْنِنَا

53. Thus did We try some of them by comparison with others, that they should say:

"Is it these then that Allah hath favored from amongst us?"

C872. Pursue the argument of the last note.

The influential people, who were not given precedence over the poor and humble but sincere disciples, were on their trial as to their spiritual insight. Their temptation was to say (and they said it in scorn):

"We are much greater than they: has Allah then selected these lowly people for His teaching?"

But that was so. And Allah knew best those who were grateful to Him for His guidance.

...أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ (٥٣)

"Is it these then that Allah hath favored from amongst us?"

...وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

54. When those come to thee who believe in Our Signs, say:

"Peace be on you:

C873. The humble who had sincere faith, were not only not sent away to humour the wealthy: they were honoured and were given a special salutation, which has become the characteristic salutation in Islam: "Peace be on you,"

- the word peace, "salam" having special affinity with the word "Islam".

In words they are given the salutation; in life they are promised Mercy by the special grace of Allah.

... كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ...

your Lord had inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy:

C874. Cf. 6:12.

...أَنَّهُ مَن عَمِلَ مِنكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ ...

verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented and amended (his conduct),

... فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٥٤)

lo! He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نفَصِّلُ الآيَاتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِينَ سَبِيلُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٥٥)

55. Thus do We explain the Signs in detail: that the way of the sinners may be shown up.

C875. If the way of the sinners (in jealousy and worldly pride) is shown up, and details are given how to honour the truly sincere, it forms the best illustration of the teaching of Allah.

Section 7

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

56. Say: "I am forbidden to worship those, other than Allah, whom ye call upon."

C876. There are a number of arguments now put forward against the Makkans who refused to believe in Allah's Message. Each argument is introduced with the word **"Say".**

Here are the first four:

1. I have received Light and will follow it;
2. I prefer my Light to your vain desires
3. your challenge -"if there is a God, why does He not finish the blasphemers at once?" - it is not for me to take up; punishment rests with God;

4. if it rested with me, it would be for me to take up your challenge; all I know is that God is not unacquainted with the existence of folly and wickedness, and many other things besides, that no mortal can know; you can see little glimpses of His Plan, and you can be sure that He will not be tardy in calling you to account.

...قُل لاَّ أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَاءكُمْ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذًا وَمَا أَنَاْ مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ (٥٦)

Say:

"I will not follow your vain desires:

if I did, I would stray from the path, and be not of the company of those who receive guidance."

...قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُم بِهِ

57. Say:

"For me, I (work) on a clear Sign from my Lord, but ye reject Him.

...مَا عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ...

What ye would see hastened is not in my power.

C877. What ye would see hastened: what ye, deniers of God, are so impatient about: the punishment which ye mockingly say does not come to you.

Cf. 13:6.

...إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلاَّ لِلّهِ يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ (٥٧)

The Command rests with none but Allah:

He declares the truth, and He is the best of Judges."

... قُل لَّوْ أَنَّ عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ الأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ

58. Say:

"If what ye would see hastened were in my power, the matter would be settled at once between you and me.

C878. The Messenger of Allah is not here to settle scores with the wicked. It is not a matter between them and him. It is a matter between them and Allah; he is only a warner against sin, and a declarer of the gospel of salvation.

...وَاللّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٥٨)

But Allah knoweth best those who do wrong."

وَعِندَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لاَ يَعْلَمُهَا إِلاَّ هُوَ...

59. With Him are the **keys** of the Unseen, the treasures that none knoweth but He.

C879. Mafatih: Plural of either miflah, a key, or maftah, a treasure.

Both meanings are implied, and I have accordingly put both in my translation.

...وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ...

He knoweth whatever there is on the earth and in the sea.

...وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِن وَرَقَةٍ إِلاَّ يَعْلَمُهَا وَلاَ حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الأَرْضِ...

Not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge:

there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth,

...وَلاَ رَطْبٍ وَلاَ يَابِسٍ إِلاَّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٥٩)

nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered),

but is (inscribed) in a Record Clear (to those who can read).

C880. This is the mystic Record, the archetypal Plan, the Eternal Law, according to which everything seen and unseen is ordered and regulated.

The simplest things in Nature are subject to His Law. The fresh and the withered, the living and the lifeless-nothing is outside the Plan of His Creation. (R).

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ...

60. It is He Who doth take your souls by night, and hath knowledge of all that ye have done by day.

... ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ لِيُقْضَى أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ...

By day doth He raise you up again; that a term appointed be fulfilled;

ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٦٠)...

in the end unto Him will be your return, then will He show you the truth of all that ye did.

C881. As the rest of His Creation is subject to His Law and Plan, so is man's life in every particular and at every moment, awake or asleep.

The mystery of Sleep -"the twin brother of death"- is called the taking of our soul by Him, with the record of all we have done in our waking moments, and this record sometimes appears to us in confused glimpses in dreams. By day we awaken again to our activities, and so it goes on until we fulfil the term of our life appointed for this earth.

Then comes the other Sleep (death), with the longer record of our Day (Life); and then, in the end comes the Resurrection and Judgment, at which we see everything clearly and not as in dreams, for that is the final Reality.

C.78 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:61-82)

Allah's loving care doth encompass
Us round throughout life,
And delivers us from dangers
By land and sea. He is the only
Protector; how can we then
Forget Him or run after things
That are mere creatures of His,
And shall perish-while He
Is the Eternal God, adored
By Abraham and all the prophets?

Section 8

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ...

61. He is the Irresistible, (watching) from above over his worshippers,

... وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُم حَفَظَةً...

and He sets guardians over you.

C882. Guardians: most commentators understand this to mean guardian angels. The idea of guardianship is expressed in a general term.

Allah watches over us and guards us, and provides all kinds of agencies, material, moral, and spiritual, to help our growth and development, keep us from harm, and bring us nearer to our Destiny.

...حَتَّىَ إِذَا جَاء أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا...

At length, when death approaches one of you, Our angels take his soul,

C883. Angel: the word used is **rusul**, the Sent Ones, - the same word as for human Messengers sent by Allah to teach mankind.

The agents who come to take our souls at death are accurate in the performance of their duty. They come neither before nor after their appointed time, nor do they do it in any manner other than that fixed by the Command of Allah.

...وَهُمْ لاَ يُفَرِّطُونَ (٦١)

and they never fail in their duty.

ثُمَّ رُدُّواْ إِلَى اللّهِ مَوْلاَهُمُ الْحَقِّ أَلاَ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ ...

62. Then are men returned unto Allah, their True Protector, the (only) reality:

Surely His is the Command?

C884. The only Reality: al-haqq, the Truth, the only True One.

The point is that our illusions of the life of this lower world now vanish, when we are rendered back to Allah, from Whom we came. And now we find that so far from the results of our actions being delayed, they follow more swiftly than we can express in terms of Time.

Here is the answer to the taunt of those who were impatient of the working of Allah's Plans (6:57-58). (R).

... وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحَاسِبِينَ (٦٢)

And He is the swiftest in taking account.

قُلْ مَن يُنَجِّيكُم مِّن ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ...

63. Say:

"Who is it that delivereth you from the dark recesses of land and sea,

C885. In continuation of the four heads of argument referred to in n. 876, we have three more heads here in 6:63-65:

1. your calling upon Him in times of danger shows that in the depths of your hearts you feel His need;
2. Allah's Providence saves you, and yet you ungratefully run after false gods;
3. it is not only physical calamities that you have to fear; your mutual discords and vengeances are even more destructive, and only faith in God can save you from them.

C886. Zulumat: dark recesses, terrible lurking dangers, as in deserts or mountains, or forests, or seas.

... تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعاً وَخُفْيَةً...

when ye call upon Him in humility and silent terror:

C887. There are two readings, but they both ultimately yield the same meaning.

- **Khufyatan;** silently, secretly. from the depth of your inner heart, suggesting unspeakable terror.

- **Khfatan;** out of terror or fear or reverence, as in 7:205.

...لَّئِنْ أَنجَانَا مِنْ هَـذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (٦٣)

'if He only delivers us from these (dangers), (we vow) we shall truly show our gratitude.'?"

قُلِ اللّهُ يُنَجِّيكُم مِّنْهَا وَمِن كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ (٦٤)

64. Say:

"It is Allah that delivereth you from these and all (other) distresses: and yet ye worship false gods!"

... قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَى أَن يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ

65. Say:

"He hath power to send calamities on you, from above and below,

C888. Calamities from above and below: such as;

- storms and blizzards, torrential rain, etc., or
- earthquakes, floods, landslides, etc.

...أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعاً وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُم بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ...

or to cover you with confusion in party strife giving you a taste of mutual vengeance -- each from the other."

...انظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ (٦٥)

See how We explain the Signs by various (symbols), that they may understand.

C889. Cf. 6:46, where this refrain commences the argument now drawing to a close.

وَكَذَّبَ بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ...

66. But thy people reject this, though it is the truth.

...قُل لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُم بِوَكِيلٍ (٦٦)

Say:

"Not mine is the responsibility for arranging your affairs;

C890. At the date of this revelation, the Messenger's people had as a body not only rejected Allah's truth, but were persecuting it. The Messenger's duty was to deliver his Message, which he did. He was not responsible for their conduct.

But he told them plainly that all warnings from Allah had their time limit, as they would soon find out, within a very few years. For the leaders of the resistance came to an evil end, and their whole system of fraud and selfishness was destroyed, to make room for the purer Faith of Islam.

Apart from that particular application, there is the more general application, for the present time and for all time.

لِّكُلِّ نَبَإٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٦٧)

67. "For every Message is a limit of time, and soon shall ye know it."

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ...

68. When thou seest men engaged in vain discourse about Our Signs, turn away from them

...حَتَّى يَخُوضُواْ فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ...

unless they turn to a different theme.

C891. Cf. 4:140.

If in any gathering truth is ridiculed, we must not sit in such company. If we find ourselves in it, as soon as we realize it, we must show our disapproval by leaving.

...وَإِمَّا يُنسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلاَ تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرَى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٦٨)

If Satan ever makes thee forget, then after recollection, sit not thou in the company of the ungodly.

وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ...

69. On their account no responsibility falls on the righteous,

C892. Every man is responsible for his own conduct. But the righteous have two duties:

- to protect themselves from infection, and

- to proclaim God's truth, for even in the most unlikely circumstances, it is possible that it may have some effect. (R).

...وَلَـٰكِن ذِكْرَى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٦٩)

but (their duty) is to remind them, that they may (learn to) fear Allah.

وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا...

70. Leave alone those who take their religion to be mere play and amusement, and are deceived by the life of this world.

C893. Cf. 6:32, where we are told that the life of this world is mere play and amusement, and Religion and the Hereafter are the serious things that require our attention.

Worldly people reverse this because they are deceived by the allurements of this life. But their own acts will find them out.

...وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَن تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ...

But proclaim (to them) this (truth): that every soul delivers itself to ruin by its own acts:

C894. We must never forget our own personal responsibility for all we do, or deceive ourselves by the illusion of vicarious atonement.

...لَيْسَ لَهَا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ ...

it will find for itself no protector or intercessor except Allah:

... وَإِن تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَّا يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا...

if it offered every ransom (or reparation), none will be accepted:

...أُولَـٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا ...

such is (the end of) those who deliver themselves to ruin by their own acts:

...لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ (٧٠)

they will have for drink (only) boiling water, and for punishment, one most grievous: for they persisted in rejecting Allah.

Section 9

قُلْ أَنَدْعُو مِن دُونِ اللّهِ مَا لاَ يَنفَعُنَا وَلاَ يَضُرُّنَا...

71. Say:

"Shall we indeed call on others besides Allah, things that can do us neither good nor harm,

C895. In continuation of the seven heads of argument referred to in notes. 876 and 885, we have here the final two heads:

8. who would, after receiving guidance from the living, eternal God, turn to lifeless idols? to do so would indeed show that we were made into fools, wandering to a precipice;
9. therefore accept the only true guidance, the guidance of God, and obey his Law, for we shall have to answer before His judgment-seat.

...وَنُرَدُّ عَلَى أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَانَا اللّهُ...

and turn on our heels after receiving guidance from Allah?

...كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الأَرْضِ حَيْرَانَ لَهُ أَصْحَابٌ يَدْعُونَهُ إِلَى

الْهُدَى ائْتِنَا...

-- like one whom the evil ones have made into a fool, wandering bewildered through the earth, his friends calling 'Come to us', (vainly) guiding him to the Path."

...قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَى وَأُمِرْنَا لِنُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧١)

Say:

"Allah's guidance is the (only) guidance, and we have been directed to submit ourselves to the Lord of the worlds;

...وَأَنْ أَقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَاتَّقُوهُ...

72. "To establish regular prayers and to fear Allah;

...وَهُوَ الَّذِيَ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٧٢)

for it is to him that we shall be gathered together."

... وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ

73. It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions):

C896. The argument mounts up here, leading to the great insight of Abraham the true in faith, who did not stop short at the wonders of nature, but penetrated "from nature up to nature's God."

Allah not only created the heavens and the earth: with every increase of knowledge we see in what true and perfect proportions all Creation is held together.

Creatures are subject to Time, but the Creator is not; His word is the key that opens the door of existence. It is not only the starting point of existence, but the whole measure and standard of Truth and Right. there may possibly be, to our sight in this great world, aberrations of human or other wills, but the moment the trumpet sounds for the last day, His Judgement seat will, with perfect justice, restore the dominion of Right and Reality. For His knowledge and wisdom cover all reality.

...وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ كُن فَيَكُونُ...

the day He saith, "Be," Behold! it is.

...قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّوَرِ...

His Word is the truth.

His will be the dominion the day the trumpet will be blown.

...عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ (٧٣)

He knoweth the Unseen as well as that which is open.

For He is the Wise, well acquainted (with all things).

... وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لأَبِيهِ آزَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً

74. Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar:

"Takest thou idols for gods?

...إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٧٤)

for I see thee and thy people in manifest error."

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ

الْمُوقِنِينَ (٧٥)

75. So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude.

C897. Now comes the story of Abraham.

He lived among the Chaldeans, who had great knowledge of the stars and heavenly bodies. But he got beyond that physical world, and saw the spiritual world behind. His ancestral idols meant nothing to him.

That was the first step. But Allah took him many degrees higher. Allah showed him with certitude the spiritual glories behind the magnificent powers and laws of the physical universe.

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا...

76. When the night covered him over, he saw a star:

...قَالَ هَـٰذَا رَبِّي...

he said: "This is my Lord."

...فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لا أُحِبُّ الآفِلِينَ (٧٦)

But when it set, he said: "I love not those that set."

C898. This allegory shows stages of Abraham's spiritual enlightenment. It should not be supposed that he literally worshipped stars or heavenly bodies. Having seen through the folly of ancestral idol worship, he began to see the futility of worshipping distant beautiful things that shine, which the vulgar endue with a power which does not reside in them. a type of such is a star shining in the darkness of the night.

Superstition might read fortunes in it, but truer knowledge shows that it rises and sets according to laws

whose author is Allah. And its light is extinguished in the broader light of day. Its worship is therefore futile. It is not a Power, much less the Supreme Power.

According to some commentators the whole thrust of Abraham's reasoning in verses 76-78 is directed against the superstitious belief of his people and demonstrates the folly of worshiping stars and other heavenly bodies. As such his statement may be seen as premises of his arguments against Polytheism rather than as stages in his spiritual enlightenment. (R).

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هَـٰذَا رَبِّي...

77. When he saw the moon rising in splendor, He said: "This is my Lord."

...فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ (٧٧)

but when the moon set, he said:

"Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray."

C899. The moon, though she looks bigger and brighter than the star, turns out on closer knowledge, not only to set like the star, but to change her shape from hour to hour, and even to depend for her light on some other body!

How deceptive are appearances! This is not Allah! At that stage you begin to search for something more reliable than appearances to the eye in the darkness of the night. You ask for guidance from Allah. (R).

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هَـٰذَا رَبِّي هَـٰذَا أَكْبَرُ...

78. When he saw the sun rising in splendor, he said:

"This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)."

...فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (٧٨)

But when the sun set, he said:

"O my people! I am (now) free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah.

C900. The next stage in the allegory is the sun. You are in the open light of Day. Now you have the right clue. You see the biggest object in the heavens.

But is it the biggest?

There are thousands of stars in the universe bigger than the sun. And every day the sun appears and disappears from your sight. such is not the god who created you and all these wonderful works of His.

What folly to worship creatures, when we might turn to the true God?

Let us abjure all these follies and proclaim the one true God.

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا...

79. "For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, toward Him Who created the heavens and the earth,

...وَمَا أَنَاْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٧٩)

and never shall I give partners to Allah."

...وَحَآجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ

80. His people disputed with him.

C901. The story of Abraham is highly instructive for all men in quest of truth.

If spiritual enlightenment go so far as to take a man beyond his ancestral worship, people will continue to dispute with him. They will frighten him with the dire consequences of his dissent.

What does he care? He has found the truth. He is free from superstitious fears, for has he not found the true God, without Whose Will nothing can happen?

On the contrary he knows that it is the godless who have just grounds for fear. And he offers admonition to them, and the arguments that should bring them the clearness of truth instead of the vagueness and mystery of superstition, -the security of Faith instead of the haunting fear of those who have no clear guidance. (R).

...قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِّي فِي اللّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ ...

He said:

"(Come) ye to dispute with me, about Allah, when He (Himself) hath guided me?

...وَلاَ أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلاَّ أَن يَشَاء رَبِّي شَيْئًا...

I fear not (the beings) ye associate with Allah: unless my Lord willeth, (nothing can happen).

...وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا أَفَلاَ تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٨٠)

My Lord comprehendeth in His knowledge all things:

will ye not (yourselves) be admonished?

وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ ...

81. "How should I fear (the beings) ye associate with Allah,

... وَلاَ تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُم بِاللّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا...

when ye fear not to give partners to Allah without any warrant having been given to you?

...فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالأَمْنِ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨١)

Which of (us) two parties hath more right to security?

(Tell me) if ye know.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُواْ إِيمَانَهُم بِظُلْمٍ أُوْلَـئِكَ لَهُمُ الأَمْنُ ...

82. "It is those who believe and confuse not their beliefs with wrong -- that are (truly) in security,

C901a. The word "wrong" here refers to ascribing partners to Allah as has been stated by the Prophet (peace be on him) in his explanation of the verse. [Eds]

... وَهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٨٢)

for they are on (right) guidance."

C.79 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:83-110)

The good men and true, who succeeded
Abraham, received the gifts
Of revelation and guidance, and kept
Alive Allah's Message, which now
Is proclaimed in the Quran,
In which is blessing and confirmation
Of all that went before. In the daily
Pageants of Nature-the dawn
And the restful night, the sun,
The moon, the stars, the guide
The mariner in distant seas,
The rain-clouds pouring abundance,
And the fruits that delight the heart
Of man-can ye not read
Signs of Allah? No vision can
Comprehend Him, yet He
Knoweth and comprehendeth all.

Section 10

وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ...

83. That was the reasoning about Us, which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people:

C902. The spiritual education of Abraham raised him many degrees above his contemporaries, and he as expected to use that knowledge and dignity for preaching the truth among his own people.

...نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَّن نَّشَاء...

We raise whom We will, degree after degree:

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ (٨٣)

for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge.

...وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلاًّ هَدَيْنَا

84. We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) We guided:

C903. We have now a list of eighteen Prophets in four groups, covering the great Teachers accepted among the three great religions based on Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad.

The first group to be mentioned is that of Abraham, his son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob.

Abraham was the first to have a Book. His Book is mentioned in 87:19, though it is now lost. They were therefore the first to receive Guidance in the sense of a Book.

...وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ...

and before him, We guided Noah,

C904. In the second group, we have the great founders of families, apart from Abraham, viz., Noah of the time of the Flood;

- David and Solomon, the real establishers of the Jewish monarchy;
- Job, who lived 140 years, saw four generations of descendants, and was blessed at the end of his life with large pastoral wealth (Job 42:16,12);
- Joseph, who as Minister of State did great things in Egypt and was the progenitor of two Tribes; and
- Moses and Aaron, the leaders of the Exodus from Egypt. They led active lives and called "doers of good."

...وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ...

and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron:

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٨٤)

thus do We reward those who do good:

... وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَإِلْيَاسَ

85. And Zakariya and John, and Jesus and Elias:

C905. The third group consists not of men of action, but Preachers of Truth, who led solitary lives. Their epithet is: "the Righteous."

They form a connected group round Jesus. Zakariya was the father of John the Baptist as Elias, which was for to come" (Matt 11:14); and Elias is said to have been present and talked to Jesus at the Transfiguration on the Mount (Matt. 17:3).

Elias is the same as Elijah. (R).

... كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٨٥)

all in the ranks of the righteous:

...وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا

86. And Isma'il and Elisha, and Jonahs, and Lut:

C906. This is the last group, described as those "favoured above the nations."

It consists of four men who had all great misfortunes to contend with, and were concerned in the clash of nations, but they kept in the path of Allah, and came through above the clash of nations.

- Ismail was the eldest son of Abraham; when he was a baby, he and his mother had nearly died of thirst in the desert round Makkah; but they were saved by the well of Zamzam, and became the founder of the new Arab nation.

- Elisha (Al-Yasa) succeeded to the mantle of the Prophet Elijah (same as Elias, see last note); he lived in troublous times for both the Jewish kingdoms (of Judah and Israel); there were wicked kings, and other nations were pressing in on them; but he

performed many miracles, and some check was given to the enemies under his advice.

- The story of Jonah (Yunus) is well-known: he was swallowed by a fish or whale, but was saved by God's mercy: through his preaching, his city (Nineveh) was saved (10:98).

- Lut was a contemporary and nephew of Abraham: when the city of Sodom was destroyed for its wickedness, he was saved as a just man (7:80-84).

...وَكُلاً فضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٦)

and to all We gave favor above the nations:

...وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ

87. (To them) and to their fathers, and progeny and brethren:

C907. I take verse 87 to refer back to all the four groups just mentioned.

...وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٨٧)

We chose them.

And We guided them to a straight way.

...ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ

88. This is the guidance of Allah:

He giveth that guidance to whom He pleaseth, of His worshippers.

...وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُواْ لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (٨٨)

If they were to join other gods with Him, all that they did would be vain for them.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ

89. These were the men to whom We gave the Book, and authority, and prophethood:

...فَإِن يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَـؤُلاء فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُواْ بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ (٨٩)

if these (their descendants) reject them, behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new People who reject them not.

C908. Them, i.e., the Book, and authority and Prophethood. They were taken away from the other People of the Book and entrusted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his People.

أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللّهُ فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ...

90. Those were the (prophets) who received Allah's guidance:
copy the guidance they received;

...قُل لاَّ أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا...

Say:
"No reward for this do I ask of you:

...إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ ذِكْرَى لِلْعَالَمِينَ (٩٠)...

this is no less than a Message for the nations."

Section 11

وَمَا قَدَرُواْ اللّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُواْ مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ عَلَى بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ...

91. No just estimate of Allah do they make when they say: "Nothing doth Allah send down to man (by way of revelation)":

C909. Qadara: to weight, judge, or estimate the value or capacity of anything; to have power so to do.

Cf. Qadir in 4:149 and n. 655.

The Jews who denied the inspiration of Muhammad had a good answer in their own books about the inspiration of Moses.

To those who do not believe in Moses, the answer is more general:

is it a just estimate of Allah to think either that He has not the power or the will to guide mankind, seeing that He is Omnipotent and the Source of all good?

If you say that guidance comes, not through an inspired book or man, but through our general intelligence, we point to the spiritual ignorance of 'you and your

ancestors' the sad spiritual darkness of men and nations high in the intellectual scale.

...قُلْ مَنْ أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاء بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ...

Say: "Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought? a light and guidance to man:

C910. Cf. 5:47 and n. 750, and 5:49.

In those passages Guidance (in practical conduct) is put before Light (or spiritual insight), as they refer to ordinary or average men.

Here Light (or spiritual insight) is put first as the question is: does God send inspiration?

...تَجْعَلُونَهُ قَرَاطِيسَ تُبْدُونَهَا وَتُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا...

but ye make it into (separate) sheets for show, while ye conceal much (of its contents):

C911. The Message to Moses had unity: it was one Book.

The present Old Testament is a collection of books ("sheets") of various kinds: see Appendix II. end of Surah 5. In this way you can make a show, but there is no unity, and much of the spirit is lost or concealed or overlaid.

The same applies to the New Testament:

see Appendix III, after Appendix II.

...وَعُلِّمْتُم مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنتُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ...

therein were ye taught that which ye knew not -- neither ye nor your fathers."

...قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ (٩١)

Say: "Allah (sent it down)":

then leave them to plunge in vain discourse and trifling.

وَهَـذَا كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ...

92. And this is a Book which We have revealed, bringing blessings, and confirming (the revelations) which came before it:

C912. Muharak: blessed, as having received Allah's blessing; bringer of blessings to others, as having been blessed by Allah.

Allah's highest blessing is the Guidance and Light which the Book brings to us, and which brings us nearer to Him.

...وَلِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا...

that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her.

C913. Mother of Cities: Makkah, now the Qiblah and Centre of Islam.

If this verse was (like the greater part of the Chapter) revealed in Makkah before the Hijrah, and before Makkah was made the Qiblah of Islam, Makkah was nonetheless the Mother of Cities, being traditionally associated with Abraham and with Adam and Eve (see 2:125, and n. 217 to 2:197).

All round Makkah: would mean, the whole world if we took upon Mecca as the centre.

...وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ...

Those who believe in the Hereafter believe in this (Book),

...وَهُمْ عَلَى صَلاَتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (٩٢)

and they are constant in guarding their prayers.

C914. An earnest study of the Quran is true worship; so is Prayer, and so are all deeds of goodness and charity.

...وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللّهِ كَذِبًا

93. Who can be more wicked than one who inventeth a lie against Allah,

...أَوْ قَالَ أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ...

or saith, "I have received inspiration," when he hath received none,

...وَمَن قَالَ سَأُنزِلُ مِثْلَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ...

or (again) who saith, "I can reveal the like of what Allah hath revealed?"

...وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ ...

If thou couldst but see how the wicked (do fare) in the flood of confusion at death! --

... وَالْمَلآئِكَةُ بَاسِطُواْ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرِجُواْ أَنفُسَكُمُ...

the angels stretch forth their hands, (saying), "Yield up your souls.

C915. Yield up your souls: or "get your souls to come out of your bodies."

The wicked, we may suppose, are not anxious to part with the material existence in their bodies for the "reward" which in irony is stated to be there to welcome them.

...الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ...

This day shall ye receive your reward, a penalty of shame, for that ye used to tell lies against Allah,

...وَكُنتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٩٣)

and scornfully to reject of His Signs!"

...وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا فُرَادَى كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ...

94. "And behold! ye come to Us bare and alone as We created you for the first time:

C916. Some of the various ideas connected with "creation" are noted in n. 120 to 2:117.

In the matter of creation of man there are various processes. If his body was created out of clay, i.e. earthy matter, there was an earlier process of the creation of such earthy matter.

Here the body is left behind, and the soul is being addressed. The soul underwent various processes of

fashioning and adapting to its various functions in its various surroundings (32:7-9). But each individual soul, after release from the body, comes back as it was created, with nothing more than it history, "the deeds which it has earned," which are really a part of it. Any exterior things given to help in its development, "the favours which we bestowed on you," it must necessarily leave behind, however it may have been proud of them.

These exterior things may be material things, e.g. wealth, property, signs of power, influence and pride such as sons, relatives, and friends, etc., or they may be intangible things, like talents, intellect, social gifts, etc.

...وَتَرَكْتُم مَّا خَوَّلْنَاكُمْ وَرَاء ظُهُورِكُمْ...

Ye have left behind you all (the favors) which We bestowed on you:

...وَمَا نَرَى مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَاءكُمُ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكَاء...

We see not with you your intercessors whom ye thought to be partners in your affairs:

...لَقَد تَّقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنكُم مَّا كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ (٩٤)

so now all relations between you have been cut off, and your (pet) fancies have left you in the lurch!"

C917. The false ideas of intercessors, demi-gods, gods, saviours, etc., now vanish like unsubstantial visions, "leaving not a wrack behind."

Now the soul is face to face with reality. Its personal responsibility is brought home to it.

Section 12

...إِنَّ اللّهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى...

95. It is Allah Who causeth the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout.

C918. Another beautiful nature passage, referring to Allah's wonderful artistry in His Creation.

In how few and how simple words, the whole pageant of Creation is placed before us. Beginning from our humble animal needs and dependence on the vegetable world, we are asked to contemplate the interaction of the living and the dead. Here is mystic teaching, referring not only to physical life but to the higher life above the physical plane, -not only to individual life but to the collective life of nations.

Then we take a peep into the daily miracle of morning, noon, and night, and pass on to the stars that guide the distant mariner. We rise still higher to the mystery of the countless individuals from the one human soul, -their sojourn and their destiny. So we get back to the heavens: the description of the luscious fruits which the "gentle rain from heaven" produces, leaves us to contemplate the spiritual fruits which faith will provide for us, with the aid of the showers of God's mercy.

C919. The seed-grain and the date-stone are selected as types in the vegetable kingdom, showing how our physical life depends on it.

The fruits mentioned later (in 6:99) start another allegory which we shall notice later.

Botanists will notice that the seed-grain includes the cereals (such as wheat, barley, rice, millet, etc.) which are monocotyledons, as well as the pulses (such as beans, peas, gram, etc.) and other seeds which are dicotyledons.

These two represent the most important classes of food-grains, while the date-palm a monocotyledon, represents for Arabia both food, fruit, confectionery, thatch and pillars for houses, shady groves in oases, and a standard measure of wealth and well being.

"Split and sprout": both ideas are included in the root falaqa, and a third is expressed by the word "cleave" in the next verse, for the action of evolving day-break from the dark. I might almost have used the word "churn," familiar to students of Hindu lore in the Hindu allegory of the "churning of the ocean." For vegetables, "split and sprout" represents a double process:

- the seed divides, and
- one part shoots up, seeking the light, and forming leaves and the visible parts of the future tree, and the other part digs down into the dark, forming the roots and seeking just that sustenance from the soil, which is adapted for the particular plant.

This is just one small instance of the "Judgement and ordering" of God, referred to in the next verse.

...يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ...

He causeth the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one to cause the dead to issue from the living.

C920. This does not mean that in physical nature there are no limits between life and non-life, between the organic and the non-organic. In fact physicists are baffled at the barrier between them and frankly confess that they cannot solve the mystery of Life.

If there is such a barrier in physical nature, is it not all the more wonderful that Allah can create Life out of nothing? He has but to say, "Be," and it is. He can bring Life from non-Life and annihilate Life.

But there are two other senses in which we can contemplate the contrast between the living and the dead.

- We have just been speaking of the botanical world. Take it as a whole, and see the contrast between the winter of death, the spring of revivification, the summer of growth, and the autumn of decay, leading back to the death of winter. Here is a cycle of living for dead, and dead from living.
- Take our spiritual life, individual or collective. We rise from the darkness of spiritual nothingness to the light of spiritual life. And if we do not follow the spiritual laws, Allah will take away that life and we shall be again as dead. We may die many deaths. The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. Neither Life nor Death are fortuitous things. Behind them both is the Cause of Causes, -and only He.

...ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّىٰ تُؤْفَكُونَ (٩٥)

That is Allah;

then how are ye deluded away from the truth?

فَالِقُ الإِصْبَاحِ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا...

96. He it is that cleaveth the daybreak (from the dark):

He makes the night for rest and tranquility, and the sun and moon for the reckoning (of time):

...ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٩٦)

such is the judgment and ordering of (Him), the Exalted in Power, the Omniscient.

C921. The night, the day, the sun, the moon, -the great astronomical universe of Allah. How far, and yet how near to us!

Allah's universe is boundless, and we can barely comprehend even its relations to us. But this last we must try to do if we want to be numbered with "the people who know".

Taqdir: Cf. 6:91 and n. 909, and 4:149 and n. 655.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ...

97. It is He Who maketh the stars (as beacons) for you, that ye may guide yourselves, with their help, through the dark spaces of land and sea:

C922. See the last note.

At sea, or in the deserts or forests, or "in fairy scenes forlorn," -whenever we sweep over wide spaces, it is the stars that act as our guides, just as the sun and moon have already been mentioned as our measures of time

...قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٩٧)

We detail Our Signs for people who know.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ...

98. It is He who hath produced you from a single person:

C923. Produced: ansha'a = made you grow, increase, develop, reach maturity: another of the processes of creation. This supplements n. 120 to 2:117 and n.916 to 6:94.

It is one of the wonders of Allah's Creation, that from one person we have grown to be so many, and each individual has so many faculties and capacities, and yet we are all one.

In the next verse we have the allegory of grapes and other fruits: all grapes may be similar to look at, yet each variety has a distinctive flavour and other distinctive qualities, and each individual grape may have its own special qualities. So for man.

... فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ...

here is a place of sojourn and a place of departure:

C924. In the sojourn of this life we must respond to Allah's hand in fashioning us, by making full use of all our faculties, and we must get ready for our departure into the Life that will be eternal.

...قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ (٩٨)

We detail Our signs for people who understand.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيَ أنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء...

99. It is He who sendeth down rain from the skies:

C925. Our allegory now brings us to maturity, the fruit, the harvest, the vintage.

Through the seed we came up from nothingness to life; we lived our daily life of rest and work and passed the mile-stones of time; we had the spiritual experience of traversing through vast spaces in the spiritual world, guiding our course through the star of Faith; we grew; and now for the harvest or the vintage!

How satisfied the grower must be when the golden grain is harvested in heaps or in vintage gathered! So will man if he has produced the fruits of Faith!

...فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

with it We produce vegetation of all kinds:

...فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُّخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُّتَرَاكِبًا...

from some We produce green (crops), out of which We produce grain, heaped up (at harvest);

...وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِن طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ...

out of the date-palm and its sheaths (or spathes) (come) clusters of dates hanging low and near:

...وَجَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ...

and (then there are) gardens of grapes, and olives, and pomegranates,

each similar (in kind) yet different (in variety):

C926. Each fruit- whether it is grapes, or olives, or pomegranates, -looks alike in its species, and yet each variety may be different in flavour, consistency, shape, size, colour, juice or oil contents, proportion of seed to fruit, etc. In each variety, individuals may be different and yet equally valuable!

...انظُرُواْ إِلِى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ...

when they begin to bear fruit, and the ripeness thereof.

C927. And so we finish this wonderful allegory.

Search through the world's literature, and see if you can find another such song or hymn, -so fruity in its literary flavour, so profound in its spiritual meaning!

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكُمْ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٩٩)

Behold! in these things there are signs for people who believe.

C928. There is a refrain in this song, which is subtly varied. In verse 97 it is:

"We detail our Signs for people who know."

So far we were speaking of the things we see around us every day Knowledge is the appropriate instrument for these things.

In verse 98 we read:

"We detail Our Signs for people who understand."

Understanding is a higher faculty than knowledge, and is necessary for seeing the mystery and meaning of this life.

At the end of verse 99 we have:

"In these things there are Signs for people who believe."

Here we are speaking of the real fruits of spiritual Life. For them Faith is necessary, as bringing us nearer to Allah.

وَجَعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ...

100. Yet they make the Jinns equals with Allah, though Allah did create the Jinns;

C929. Jinns: who are they?

In 18:50 we are told that Iblis was one of the Jinns, and it is suggested that that was why he disobeyed the Command of Allah.

But in that passage and other similar passages, we are told that Allah commanded the angels to bow down to Adam, and they obeyed except Iblis. That implies that Iblis had been of the company of angels.

In many passages Jinns and men are spoken of together. In 55:14-15, man is stated to have been created from clay, while Jinns from a flame of fire.

The root meaning of junna, yujannu, is "to be covered or hidden," and janna yajunnu, in the active voice, "to cover or hide," as in 6:76.

- Some people say that jinn therefore means the hidden qualities or capacities in man;

- others that it means wild or jungle folk hidden in the hills or forests.

I do not wish to be dogmatic, but I think, from a collation and study of the Quranic passages, that the meaning is;

- simply "a spirit," or
- an invisible or hidden force.

In folk-lore stories and romances like the Arabian Nights they become personified into fantastic forms, but with them we are not concerned here.

Both the Quran and the Hadith describe the Jinn as a definite species of living beings. They are created out of fire and are like man, may believe or disbelieve, accept or reject guidance. The authoritative Islamic texts show that they are not merely a hidden force, or a spirit. They are personalized beings who enjoy a certain amount of free will and thus will be called to account. (Eds.).

...وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

and they falsely, having no knowledge, attribute to Him sons and daughters.

...سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (١٠٠)

Praise and glory be to Him! (for He is) above what they attribute to Him!

Section 13

...بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

101. To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth:

C930. Cf. n. 120 to 2:117.

...أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُن لَّهُ صَاحِبَةٌ...

how can He have a son when He hath no consort?

...وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٠١)

He created all things, and He hath full knowledge of all things.

ذَلِكُمُ اللّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لا إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ...

102. That is Allah your Lord!

there is no god but He,

the Creator of all things: then worship ye Him:

...وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (١٠٢)

and He hath power to dispose of all affairs.

لاَّ تُدْرِكُهُ الأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الأَبْصَارَ...

103. No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision:

...وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ (١٠٣)

He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.

C931. latif:

- fine, subtle, so fine and subtle as to be invisible to the physical eye;
- so fine as to be imperceptible to the senses;

figuratively, so pure as to be above the mental or spiritual vision of ordinary men.

The active meaning should also be understood: `One who understands the finest mysteries':

Cf. 22:63, and n. 2844.

قَدْ جَاءكُم بَصَآئِرُ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ...

104. "Now have come to you, from your Lord, proofs to open your eyes:

...فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا...

if any will see, it will be for (the good of) his own soul;

if any will be blind, it will be to his own (harm):

...وَمَا أَنَاْ عَلَيْكُم بِحَفِيظٍ (١٠٤)

I am not (here) to watch over your doings."

C932. I understand "Say" to be understood in the beginning of this verse. The words would then be the words of the Prophet, as in fact is suggested in verse 107 below. That is why I have enclosed them in inverted commas.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الآيَاتِ...

105. Thus do We explain the Signs by various (symbols):

C933. Cf. 6:65, and n. 889.

...وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠٥)

that they may say "Thou hast taught us diligently,"

and that We may make the matter clear to those who know.

C934. The teaching in the Quran explains things by various symbols, parables, narratives, and appeals to nature. Each time, a new phase of the question is presented to our minds. This is what a diligent and earnest teacher would do, such as was Muhammad Mustafa.

Those who were in search of knowledge and had thus acquired some knowledge of spiritual things were greatly helped to understand more clearly the things of which, before the varied explanations, they had only one-sided knowledge.

اتَّبِعْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ...

106. Follow what thou art taught by inspiration from thy Lord:

...لا إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٠٦)

there is no god but He: and turn aside from those who join gods with Allah.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُواْ...

107. If it had been Allah's Plan, they would not have taken false gods:

C935. Allah's Plan is to use the human will to co-operate in understanding Him and His relations to us. This is the answer to an objector who might say: "If He is All-powered, why does sin or evil exist in the world? Can He not destroy it?"

He can, but His Plan is different, and in any case it is not for a Teacher to force any one to accept the truths which he is inspired to preach and proclaim.

...وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ (١٠٧)

but We made thee not one to watch over their doings,

nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs.

...وَلاَ تَسُبُّواْ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ فَيَسُبُّواْ اللّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

108. Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance.

...كَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ...

Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings.

C936. A man's actual personal religion depends upon many things,

- his personal psychology,
- the background of his life,
- his hidden or repressed feelings,
- tendencies, or history (which psychoanalysis tries to unravel),
- his hereditary dispositions or antipathies, and
- all the subtle influences of his education and his environment.

The task before the man of Allah is:

1. to use any of these which can subserve the higher ends,
2. to purify such as have been misused,
3. to introduce new ideas and modes of looking at things, and
4. to combat what is wrong and cannot be mended:

all for the purpose of leading to the truth and gradually letting in spiritual light where there was darkness before.

If that is not done with discretion and the skill of a spiritual Teacher, there may be not only a reaction of

obstinacy, but an unseemly show of dishonour to the true God and His Truth, and doubts would spread among the weaker brethren whose faith is shallow and infirm.

What happens to individuals is true collectively of nations or groups of people. They think in their self-obsession that their own ideas are right. Allah in His infinite compassion bears with them, and asks those who have purer ideas of faith not to vilify the weaknesses of their neighbors, lest the neighbors in their turn vilify the real truth and make matters even worse than before.

In so far as there is active evil, He will deal with it in His own way. Of course the righteous man must not hide his light under a bushel, or compromise with evil, or refuse to establish right living where he has the power to do so.

...ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّهِم مَّرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٠٨)

In the end will they return to their Lord, and We shall then tell them the truth of all that they did.

...وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا

109. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah that if a (special) sign came to them, by it they would believe.

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا الآيَاتُ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءتْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠٩)

Say:

"Certainly (all) signs are in the power of Allah:

but what will make you (Muslims) realize that even if a (special) sign comes, they will not believe."

C937. If the Unbelievers are merely obstinate, nothing will convince them. There is no story more full of miracles than the story of Jesus. Yet in that same story we are told that Jesus said:

> "A wicked adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas":
>
> Matt, 16:4.

There are Signs given by Allah every day -understood by those who believe. A mere insistence upon some

particular or special Sign meant mere contumacy and misunderstanding of the spiritual world.

وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ...

110. We (too) shall turn to (confusion) their hearts and their eyes, even as they refused to believe in the first instance:

C938. Where there is sheer obstinacy and ridicule of faith, the result will be that such a sinner's heart will be hardened and his eyes will be sealed, so that he cannot even see the things visible to ordinary mortals.

The sinner gathers impetus in his descent towards wrong.

...وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (١١٠)

We shall leave them in their trespasses, to wander in distraction.

C939. Cf. 2:15.

Allah's grace is always ready to help human weakness or ignorance and to accept repentance and give forgiveness.

But where the sinner is in actual rebellion, he will be given none, and it will be his own fault if he wanders about distractedly, without any certain hope or refuge.

C.80 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:111-130)

Those in obstinate rebellion
Against Allah are merely deceived
And deceive each other. Leave them
Alone, but trust and obey Allah
Openly and in the inmost recess
Of your heart. The plots of the wicked
Are but plots against their own souls.

Section 14

وَلَوْ أَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلآئِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتَى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ...

111. Even if We did send unto them angels, and the dead did speak unto them, and We gathered together all things before their very eyes,

C940. The most stupendous miracles even according to their ideas would not have convinced them. If the whole pageant of the spiritual world were brought before them, they would not have believed, because they -of their own choice and will - refuse knowledge and faith.

... قُبُلاً مَّا كَانُواْ لِيُؤْمِنُواْ إِلاَّ أَن يَشَاء اللّهُ...

they are not the ones to believe, unless it is in Allah's Plan:

...وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ (١١١)

but most of them ignore (the truth).

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نِبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الإِنسِ وَالْجِنِّ ...

112. Likewise did We make for every Messenger an enemy, evil ones among men and Jinns,

C941. What happened in the history of the Holy Prophet happens in the history of all righteous men who have a Message from Allah. The spirit of evil is ever active and uses men to practice deception by means of highly embellished words and plausible excuses and objections.

Allah permits these things in His Plans. It is not for us to complain. Our faith is tested, and we must stand the test steadfastly.

...يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا...

inspiring each other with flowery discourses by way of deception.

...وَلَوْ شَاء رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ (١١٢)

If thy Lord had so planned, they would not have done it:

so leave them and their inventions alone.

وَلِتَصْغَى إِلَيْهِ أَفْئِدَةُ الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ...

113. To such (deceit) let the hearts of those incline, who have no faith in the Hereafter:

...وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُواْ مَا هُم مُّقْتَرِفُونَ (١١٣)

let them delight in it, and let them earn from it what they may.

C942. People who have no faith in the future destiny of man may listen to and be taken in by the deceit of evil.

If they take a delight in it, let them. See what they gain by it. Their gains will be as deceitful as their delight. For the end of evil must be evil.

أَفَغَيْرَ اللّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلاً...

114. Say:

"Shall I seek for judge other than Allah?

when He it is Who hath sent unto you the Book, explained in detail."

C943. The righteous man seeks no other standard of Judgement but Allah's Will. How can he, when Allah in His grace has explained His Will in the Quran, with details which men of every capacity can understand?

The humblest can learn lessons of right conduct in daily life, and the most advanced can find the highest wisdom in its spiritual teaching, enriched as it is with all kinds of beautiful illustrations from nature and the story of man.

...وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ ...

They know full well, to whom We have given the Book, that it hath been sent down from thy Lord in truth.

...فَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (١١٤)

Never be then of those who doubt.

...وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلاً لاَّ مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ...

115. The Word of thy Lord doth find its fulfillment in truth and in justice:

none can change His Words:

...وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١١٥)

for He is the one who heareth and knoweth all.

...وَإِن تُطِعْ أَكْثَرَ مَن فِي الأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ

116. Wert thou to follow the common run of those on earth, they will lead thee away from the Way of Allah.

...إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَخْرُصُونَ (١١٦)

They follow nothing but conjecture:

they do nothing but lie.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَن يَضِلُّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ

117. Thy Lord knoweth best who strayeth from His Way.

...وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (١١٧)

He knoweth best who they are that receive His guidance.

فَكُلُواْ مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِن كُنتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١١٨)

118. So eat of (meats) on which Allah's name hath been pronounced, if ye have faith in His Signs.

...وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلاَّ تَأْكُلُواْ مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّهِ عَلَيْهِ

119. Why should ye not eat of (meats) on which Allah's name hath been pronounced,

...وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُم مَّا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلاَّ مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ...

when He hath explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you -- except under compulsion of necessity?

C944. Cf. 5:4.

When a clear law has explained what is lawful and unlawful in food, it is wrong to raise fresh scruples and mislead the ignorant.

...وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لَّيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَائِهِم بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

But many do mislead (men) by their appetites unchecked by knowledge.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ (١١٩)

Thy Lord knoweth best those who transgress.

وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ...

120. Eschew all sin, open or secret:

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ (١٢٠)

those who earn sin, will get due recompense for their "earnings."

وَلاَ تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ ...

121. Eat not of (meats) on which Allah's name hath not been pronounced: that would be impiety.

...وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَى أَوْلِيَآئِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ ...

But the evil ones ever inspire their friends to contend with you;

...وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ (١٢١)

if ye were to obey them, ye would indeed be pagans.

Section 15

أَوَ مَن كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ...

122. Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a Light whereby he can walk amongst men,

C945. Here is an allegory of the good man with his divine mission and the evil man with his mission of evil.

- The former, before he got his spiritual life, was like one dead. It was Allah's grace that gave him spiritual life, with a Light by which he could walk and guide his own footsteps as well as the footsteps of those who are willing to follow God's light.
- The opposite type is that which hates Allah's light, which lives in the depths of darkness, and which plots and burrows against all that is good. But the plots of evil recoil on itself, although it thinks that they will hurt the good.

Can these two types be for a moment compared with each other? Perhaps the lead in every centre of population is taken by the men of evil. But the good men should not be discouraged. They should work in righteousness and fulfil their mission.

...كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا...

be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out?

...كَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٢٢)

Thus to those without faith their own deeds seem pleasing.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكَابِرَ مُجْرِمِيهَا لِيَمْكُرُوا فِيهَا...

123. Thus have We placed leaders in every town, its wicked men, to plot (and burrow) therein:

...وَمَا يَمْكُرُونَ إِلَّا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (١٢٣)

but they only plot against their own souls, and they perceive it not.

وَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُوا لَن نُّؤْمِنَ حَتَّىٰ نُؤْتَىٰ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ اللَّهِ...

124. When there comes to them a Sign (from Allah), they say:

"We shall not believe until we receive one (exactly) like those received by Allah's messengers."

C946. Besides the teaching in Allah's Word, and the teaching in Allah's world, of nature and history and human contacts, many Signs also come to the ungodly, in the shape of warnings or otherwise, which the ungodly either do not heed, or deliberately reject.

The Signs in the two cases are not the same, and that becomes one of their perverse arguments against Faith. But Allah's working will be according to His own Will and Plan, and not according to the wishes whims of the ungodly.

...اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ ...

Allah knoweth best where (and how) to carry out His mission.

سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغَارٌ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا كَانُوا...

يَمْكُرُونَ (١٢٤)

Soon will the wicked be overtaken by humiliation before Allah, and a severe punishment, for all their plots.

فَمَن يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَن يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلإِسْلاَمِ...

125. Those whom Allah (in His Plan) willeth to guide, He openeth their breast to Islam;

C947. Allah's Universal Plan is the *Qadha wa Qadr*, which is so much misunderstood. That Plan is unalterable, and that is His Will.

It means that in the spiritual world, as in t physical world, there are laws of justice, mercy, grace, penalty, etc., which work as surely as anything we know.

If, then, a man refuses Faith, becomes a rebel, with each step he goes further and further down, and his pace will be accelerated; he will scarcely be able to take spiritual breath, and his recovery -in spite of Allah's mercy which he has rejected-will be as difficult as if he had to climb up to the skies.

On the other hand, the godly will find, with each step, the next step easier. Jesus expressed this truth paradoxically:

> "He that hath, to him shall be given; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath": Mark, 4:25.
>
> John (6:65) make Jesus say: "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

وَمَن يُرِدْ أَن يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِي...

السَّمَاءِ...

those whom He willeth to leave straying, He maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies:

...كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٢٥)

thus doth Allah (heap) the penalty on those who refuse to believe.

وَهَـذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا...

126. This is the way of thy Lord, leading straight:

...قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (١٢٦)

We have detailed the Signs for those who receive admonition.

لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلاَمِ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (١٢٧)

127. For them will be a Home of Peace in the presence of their Lord:
He will be their Friend, because they practiced (righteousness).

C948. Cf. 10;25.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُم مِّنَ الإِنسِ...

128. One day will He gather them all together, (and say):
"O ye assembly of Jinns! much (toll) did ye take of men."

C949. Jinns are spirits -here evil spirits.

See 6:100, n. 929.

...وَقَالَ أَوْلِيَآؤُهُم مِّنَ الإِنسِ ...

Their friends amongst men will say:

... رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَبَلَغْنَا أَجَلَنَا الَّذِيَ أَجَّلْتَ لَنَا ...

"Our Lord! we made profit from each other: but (alas!) we reached our term -- which Thou didst appoint for us."

C950. It is common experience that the forces of evil make an alliance with each other, and seem thus to make a **profit** by their mutual log-rolling.

But this is only in this material world. When the limited term expires, their unholy bargains will be exposed, and there will be nothing but regrets.

...قَالَ النَّارُ مَثْوَاكُمْ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا إِلاَّ مَا شَاء اللّهُ...

He will say:

"The fire be your dwelling-place you will dwell therein for ever, except as Allah willeth."

C951. Eternity and infinity are abstract terms. They have no precise meaning in our human experience.

The qualification, "except as Allah willeth," makes it more intelligible, as we can form some idea -however inadequate- of a Will and Plan, and we know Allah by His attribute of Mercy as well as of Justice.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٢٨)

For thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge.

وَكَذَلِكَ نُوَلِّي بَعْضَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْسِبُونَ (١٢٩)

129. Thus do We make the wrongdoers turn to each other, because of what they earn.

C952. See n. 950 above.

Evil consorts with evil because of their mutual bargains. But in doing so they save the righteous from further temptation.

C.81 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:130-150)

Allah punishes not mere shortcoming
There are degrees in good and evil
Deeds. Allah is Merciful, but
His Plan is sure and none
Can stand in its way. We must
Avoid all superstition, and all excess
And humbly ask for His guidance.

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ ...

130. O ye assembly of Jinns and men! came there not unto you messenger from amongst you,

C953. "Messenger from amongst you."

This is addressed to the whole gathering of men and Jinns. (R).

...يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاء يَوْمِكُمْ هَـذَا...

setting forth unto you of the meeting of this day of yours?"

...قَالُواْ شَهِدْنَا عَلَى أَنفُسِنَا...

They will say: "We bear witness against ourselves."

...وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُواْ عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ كَافِرِينَ (١٣٠)

It was the life of this world that deceived them.

So against themselves will they bear witness that they rejected Faith.

ذَلِكَ أَن لَّمْ يَكُن رَّبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا غَافِلُونَ (١٣١)

131. (The messengers were sent) thus, for thy Lord would not destroy for their wrongdoing men's habitations whilst their occupants were unwarned.

وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجَاتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُواْ ...

132. To all are degrees (or ranks) according to their deeds:

C954. On good and evil there are infinite degrees, in our deeds and motives: so will there be degrees in our spiritual position.

For everything is known to Allah, better than it is to ourselves.

... وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٣٢)

for thy Lord is not unmindful of anything that they do.

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ...

133. Thy Lord is Self-sufficient, full of Mercy:

C955. Allah is not dependent on our prayer or service. It is out of His Mercy that He desires our own good.

Any race or people to whom He gives chances should understand that its failure does not affect Allah. He could create others in their place, as He did in times past, and is doing in our own day, if only we had the wit to see it.

...إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِن بَعْدِكُم مَّا يَشَاء...

if it were His Will, He could destroy you, and in your place appoint whom He will as your successors,

...كَمَآ أَنشَأَكُم مِّن ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ (١٣٣)

even as he raised you up from the posterity of other people.

... إِنَّ مَا تُوعَدُونَ لَآتٍ

134. All that hath been promised unto you will come to pass:

C956. Both the good news and the warning which Allah's messengers came to give will be fulfilled. Nothing can stop Allah's Universal Plan.

See n. 947 to 6:125.

... وَمَا أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ (١٣٤)

nor can ye frustrate it (in the least bit).

قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُواْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ...

135. Say:

"O my people! do whatever ye can: I will do (my part):

C957. In so far as this is addressed to the Unbelievers it is a challenge:

"Do your utmost; nothing will deter me from my duty: we shall see who wins in the end."

Passing from the particular occasion, we can understand it in a more general sense, which is true for all time. Let

the evil ones do their worst. Let those who believe do all they can, according to their opportunities and abilities.

The individual must do the straight duty that lies before him. In the end Allah will judge, and His Judgement is always true and just.

...فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَن تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ...

soon will ye know who it is whose end will be (best) in the Hereafter:

...إِنَّهُ لاَ يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ (١٣٥)...

certain it is that the wrongdoers will not prosper."

...وَجَعَلُواْ لِلّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا...

136. Out of what Allah hath produced in abundance in tilth and in cattle, they assigned Him a share:

...فَقَالُواْ هَـذَا لِلّهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهَـذَا لِشُرَكَآئِنَا...

they say, according to their fancies: "This is for Allah, and this for our 'partners'"!

C958. There is scathing sarcasm here, which some of the Commentators have missed.

The Pagans have generally a big Pantheon, though above it they have a vague idea of a Supreme God. But the material benefits go to the godlings, the fancied "partners" of Allah; for they have temples, priests, dedications, etc., while the true and supreme God has only lip-worship, or at best a share with numerous "partners". This was so in Arabia also.

The shares assigned to the "partners", went to the priests and hangers-on of the "partners", who were many and clamorous for their rights. The share assigned to Allah went to the poor, but more probably went to the priests who had the cult of the "partners", for the Supreme God had no separate priests of His own.

It is also said that when heaps were thus laid out, if any portion of Allah's heap fell into the heaps of the

"partners", the priests greedily and promptly appropriated it, while in the contrary case, the "partners" priests were careful to reclaim any portion from what they called "Allah's heap".

The absurdity of the whole thing is ridiculed. Allah created everything: how can He have a share?

...فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ فَلاَ يَصِلُ إِلَى اللّهِ...

But the share of their 'partners' reacheth not Allah,

...وَمَا كَانَ لِلّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلَى شُرَكَآئِهِمْ ...

whilst the share of Allah reacheth their 'partners'!

...سَاء مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (١٣٦)

Evil (and unjust) is their assignment!

...وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلاَدِهِمْ شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ

137. Even so, in the eyes of most of the Pagans, their 'partners' made alluring the slaughter of their children,

C959. The false gods and idols -among many nations, including the Arabs- were supposed to require human sacrifices. Ordinarily such sacrifices are revolting to man, but they are made "alluring" -a sacred rite- by Pagan custom, which falsely arrogates to itself the name of religion.

Such customs, if allowed, would do nothing but destroy the people who practice them, and make their religion but a confused bundle of revolting superstitions.

...لِيُرْدُوهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُواْ عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ ...

in order to lead them to their own destruction, and cause confusion in their religion.

...وَلَوْ شَاء اللّهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ (١٣٧)

If Allah had willed, they would not have done so:

but leave alone them and their inventions.

وَقَالُواْ هَـذِهِ أَنْعَامٌ وَحَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ لاَّ يَطْعَمُهَا إِلاَّ مَن نَّشَاء بِزَعْمِهِمْ...

138. And they say that such and such cattle and crops are taboo, and none should eat of them except those whom -- so they say -- We wish;

C960. A taboo of certain foods is sometimes a device of the priesthood to get special things for itself. It has to be enforced by pretending that the prohibition for others is by the Will of Allah. It is a lie or invention against Allah. Most superstitions are.

...وَأَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُورُهَا ...

further, there are cattle forbidden to yoke or burden,

C961. Cattle dedicated to heathen gods may be reserved from all useful work; in that case they are a dead loss to the community, and they may, besides, do a great deal of damage to fields and crops.

... وَأَنْعَامٌ لاَّ يَذْكُرُونَ اسْمَ اللّهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَاء عَلَيْهِ...

and cattle on which (at slaughter), the name of Allah is not pronounced;

inventions against Allah's name:

C962. If meat is killed in the name of heathen gods, it would naturally not be killed by the solemn rite in Allah's name, by which alone the killing can be justified for food.

See 698 to 5:4.

...سَيَجْزِيهِم بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ (١٣٨)

soon will He requite them for their inventions.

وَقَالُواْ مَا فِي بُطُونِ هَـذِهِ الأَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُورِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلَى أَزْوَاجِنَا...

139. They say:

"What is in the wombs of such and such cattle is specially reserved (for food) for our men, and forbidden to our women;

...وَإِن يَكُن مَّيْتَةً فَهُمْ فِيهِ شُرَكَاء...

but if it is still-born then all have shares therein.

C963. These are further Pagan superstitions about cattle. Some have already been noted in 6:136, which may be consulted with the notes.

سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٣٩)...

For their (false) attribution (of superstitions to Allah): He will soon punish them:

for He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge.

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

140. Lost are those who slay their children, from folly, without knowledge,

وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ...

and forbid food which Allah hath provided for them, inventing (lies) against Allah.

قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ (١٤٠)...

They have indeed gone astray and heeded no guidance.

Section 17

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ...

141. It is He who produceth gardens, with trellises and without,

C964. Ansha'a: see 6:98, n. 923.

وَالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا أُكُلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ...

and dates, and tilth with produce of all kinds,

and olives and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety):

C965. A beautiful passage, with music to match the meaning.

Cf. 6:99 and notes.

كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ ...

eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered.

... وَلاَ تُسْرِفُواْ...

But waste not by excess:

C966. "Waste not, want not," says the English proverb.

Here the same wisdom is preached from a higher motive. See what magnificent means Allah provides in nature for the sustenance of all His creatures, because He loves them all. Enjoy them in moderation and be grateful.

But commit no excess, and commit no waste: the two things are the same from different angles of vision. If you do, you take away something from other creatures and Allah would not like your selfishness.

...إِنَّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (١٤١)

for Allah loveth not the wasters.

وَمِنَ الأَنْعَامِ حَمُولَةً وَفَرْشًا...

142. Of the cattle are some for burden and some for meat.

C967. Superstition kills true religion. We come back to the Arab Pagan superstitions about cattle for food.

The horse is not mentioned, because horse flesh was not an article of diet and there were no superstitions about it.

Sheep and goats, camels and oxen were the usual sources of meat. Sheep and goats were not used as beasts of burden, but camels (of both sexes) were used for carrying burdens, and oxen for the plough, though cows were mainly used for milk and meat.

The words "some for burden and some for meat" so not differentiate whole species, except that they give you the first two and the last two categories.

...كُلُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّهُ...

Eat what Allah hath provided for you,

...وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٤٢)

and follow not the footsteps of Satan: for he is to you an avowed enemy.

ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ ...

143. (Take) eight (head of cattle) in (four) pairs:

C968. The superstitions referred to in vi. 139 and v. 106 are further ridiculed in this verse, and the next.

... مِّنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ...

of sheep a pair,

and of goats a pair;

...قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الأُنثَيَيْنِ...

say, hath He forbidden the two males, or the two females, or (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose?

...نَبِّؤُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٤٣)

Tell me with knowledge if ye are truthful.

وَمِنَ الإِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ...

144. Of camels a pair, and of oxen a pair;

...قُلْ آلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الأُنثَيَيْنِ...

say, hath He forbidden the two males, or the two females,

or the (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose?

...أَمْ كُنتُمْ شُهَدَاء إِذْ وَصَّاكُمُ اللّهُ بِهَـذَا...

Were ye present when Allah ordered you such a thing?

...فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللّهِ كَذِبًا لِيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

But who doth more wrong than one who invents a lie against Allah, to lead astray men without knowledge?

...إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٤٤)

For Allah guideth not people who do wrong.

Section 18

قُل لاَّ أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلاَّ...

145. Say:

"I find not in the Message received by me by inspiration any (meat) forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it, unless

...أَن يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ ...

- it be dead meat,
- or blood poured forth,
- or the flesh of swine, for it is an abomination,

C969. Blood poured forth: as distinguished from blood adhering to flesh, or the liver, or such other internal organs purifying the blood.

...أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّهِ بِهِ...

- or, what is impious, (meat) on which a name has been invoked, other than Allah's."

...فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلاَ عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٤٥)

But (even so), if a person is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, thy Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُواْ حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفُرٍ...

146. For those who followed the Jewish Law, We forbade every (animal) with undivided hoof,

C970. Zufur may mean claw or hoof;

it is in the singular number; but as no animal has a single claw, and there is no point in a division of claws, we must look to a hoof for the correct interpretation.

In the Jewish Law (Leviticus, 11:3-6), "Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts" was lawful as food, but the

camel, the coney (rabbit), and the hare were not lawful, because the do not "divide the hoof".

"Undivided hoof" therefore is the correct interpretation.

These three animals, unlawful to the Jews, are lawful in Islam.

Cf. 4:160.

...وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا...

and We forbade them the fat of the ox and the sheep,

C971. In Leviticus (7:23) it is laid down that "ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep or of goat."

As regard the exceptions, it is to be noticed that priests were enjoined (Leviticus, 7:6) to eat of the fat in the trespass of offering, which was considered holy, viz., "the rump" (back and bone) "and the fat that covereth the inwards" (entrails), (Leviticus, 7:3).

...إِلاَّ مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُمَا أَوِ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ...

except what adheres to their backs or their entrails, or is mixed up with a bone:

...ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُم بِبَغْيِهِمْ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ (١٤٦)

this in recompense for their wilful disobedience:

for We are True (in Our ordinances).

فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُل رَّبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ...

147. If they accuse thee of falsehood, say:

"Your Lord is full of Mercy All-embracing;

...وَلاَ يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٤٧)

but from people in guilt never will His wrath be turned back.

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاء اللّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلاَ آبَاؤُنَا ...

148. Those who give partners to Allah will say,

"If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him, nor would our father;

... وَلاَ حَرَّمْنَا مِن شَيْءٍ...

nor should we have had any taboos."

C972. As used by the Pagans, the argument is false, for it implies;

a. that men have no personal responsibility,

b. that they are the victims of a Determinism against which they are helpless, and

c. that they might therefore go on doing just what they liked.

It is also inconsistent, for if (b) is true, (c) cannot be true. Nor is it meant to be taken seriously.

...كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِم حَتَّى ذَاقُواْ بَأْسَنَا...

So did their ancestors argue falsely, until they tasted of Our wrath.

...قُلْ هَلْ عِندَكُم مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا...

Say:

"Have ye any (certain) Knowledge?

If so, produce it before us.

...إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ تَخْرُصُونَ (١٤٨)

Ye follow nothing but conjecture:

Ye do nothing but lie."

... قُلْ فَلِلّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ

149. Say:

"With Allah is the argument that reaches home:

C973. On the other hand, the argument cuts true and deep, as from Allah to His creatures.

Allah is Omnipotent, and can do all that we can conceive. But He, in His Plan, has given man some responsibility, and some choice in order to train man's will. If man fails, he is helped in various ways by Allah's mercy and grace. But man cannot go on sinning, and in a state of sin, expect Allah to be pleased with him (6:147).

... فَلَوْ شَاء لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٤٩)

if it had been his will, he could indeed have guided you all."

قُلْ هَلُمَّ شُهَدَاءكُمُ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ اللّهَ حَرَّمَ هَـذَا...

150. Say:

"Bring forward your witnesses to prove that Allah did forbid so and so."

...فَإِن شَهِدُواْ فَلاَ تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ...

If they bring such witnesses, be not thou amongst them:

C974. The Pagan superstitions were of course baseless, and in many cases harmful and debasing. If Allah's name was taken as supporting them, no true man of God could be taken in, or join in support simply because Allah's name was taken in vain.

...وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاء الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا...

nor follow thou the vain desires of such as treat Our Signs as falsehoods,

...وَالَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ وَهُم بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ (١٥٠)

and such as believe not in the Hereafter:

for they hold others as equal with their Guardian-Lord.

C975. Cf. 6:1.

Allah, who created and who cherishes and cares for all, should have the first claim on our attention. Those who set up false gods fail to understand Allah's true governance of their own true destiny.

C.82 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(6:151-165)

Allah's commands are not irrational
Taboos, but based on the moral law,
And conformable to reason. His Way
Is the straight Way, of justice and truth.

In unity and faith must we dedicate
All our life to His service, and His
Alone, to Whom we shall return.

Section 19

قُلْ تَعَالَوْاْ أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

151. Say:

"Come, I will rehearse what Allah hath (really) prohibited you from":

C976. Instead of following Pagan superstitions, and being in constant terror of imaginary taboos and prohibitions, we should study the true moral law, whose sanction is Allah's Law.

The first step is that we should recognise that He is the One and Only Lord and Cherisher. The mention of goodness to parents immediately afterwards suggests:

- that Allah's love of us and care for us may -on an infinitely higher plane- be understood by our ideal of parental love, which is purely unselfish;

- that our first duty among our fellow creatures is to our father and mother, whose love leads us to the conception of divine love.

  Arising from that is the conception of our converse duties to our children. Allah provides sustenance (material and spiritual) not only for us, but for them; hence any custom like the Pagan custom of sacrificing children of Moloch stands condemned.

Then come the moral prohibitions against lewdness and all unseemly acts, relating to sex or otherwise, open or secret. This is followed by the prohibition of killing or fighting.

All these things are conformable to our own interests, and therefore true wisdom from our own point of view.

...أَلاَّ تُشْرِكُواْ بِهِ شَيْئًا ...

- join not anything as equal with Him;

...وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا...

- be good to your parents:

...وَلاَ تَقْتُلُواْ أَوْلاَدَكُم مِّنْ إِمْلاَقٍ نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ...

- kill not your children on a plea of want; -- We provide sustenance for you and for them; --

...وَلاَ تَقْرَبُواْ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ...

- come not nigh to shameful deeds, whether open or secret;

...وَلاَ تَقْتُلُواْ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللّهُ إِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ...

- take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law:

C977. For the comprehensive word **haqq** I have used the two words "justice and law"; other significations implied are:

right, truth, what is becoming, etc.

It is not only that human life is sacred, but all life is sacred. Even in killing animals for food, a dedicatory formula "in the name of Allah" has to be employed, to make it lawful:

see 698 to 5:4, and n. 962 to 6:138.

...ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٥١)

thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom.

وَلاَ تَقْرَبُواْ مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلاَّ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ...

152. - And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attain the age of full strength;

...وَأَوْفُواْ الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ...

- give measure and weight with (full) justice;

...لاَ نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا...

no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear;

...وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُواْ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَى...

- whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned;

...وَبِعَهْدِ اللّهِ أَوْفُواْ...

- and fulfil the Covenant of Allah:

C978. Cf. 5:1, and n. 682.

...ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (١٥٢)

thus doth He command you, that ye may remember.

...وَأَنَّ هَـذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ...

153. Verily, this is My Way, leading straight: follow it:

...وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ...

follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His (great) path:

...ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٥٣)

thus doth He command you that ye may be righteous.

C979. Note again the triple refrain with variations, in 6:151, 152, and 153.

- In verse 151, we have the moral law, which it is for our own good to follow: "Thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom."
- In verse 152, we have to deal justly and rightly with others; we are apt to thing too much of ourselves and forget others: "Thus doth He command you, that ye may remember."
- In verse 153 our attention is called to the Straight Way, the Way of Allah, the only Way that leads to righteousness: "Thus doth He command you, that ye may be righteous."

ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِيَ أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلاً لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

154. Moreover, We gave Moses the Book, completing (Our favor) to those who would do right, and explaining all things in detail,

C980. The revelation to Moses went into the details of people's lives, and thus served as a practical guide to the Jews and after them to the Christians.

Admittedly the Message delivered by Christ dealt with general principles only and in no way with details.

The message of Islam as in the Quran is the next complete guide in point of time after that of Moses.

...وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُم بِلِقَاء رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٥٤)

and a guide and a mercy, that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord.

Section 20

وَهَـذَا كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُواْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (١٥٥)

155. And this is a Book which We have revealed as a blessing:

so follow it and be righteous, that ye may receive mercy:

أَن تَقُولُواْ إِنَّمَا أُنزِلَ الْكِتَابُ عَلَى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِن قَبْلِنَا...

156. Lest ye should say:

"The Book was sent down to two peoples before us,

...وَإِن كُنَّا عَن دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَافِلِينَ (١٥٦)

and for our part, we remained unacquainted with all that they learned by assiduous study."

C981. Because the diligent studies of the earlier People of the Book were in languages foreign to the new People of Islam, or because they were meant for circumstances different from those of the new world after Islam.

أَوْ تَقُولُواْ لَوْ أَنَّا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتَابُ لَكُنَّا أَهْدَى مِنْهُمْ...

157. Or lest ye should say:

"If the Book had only been sent down to us, we should have followed its guidance better than they."

...فَقَدْ جَاءكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ ...

Now then hath come unto you a Clear (sign) from your Lord, and a guide and a mercy:

C982. The Quran and the life and the teaching of Muhammad the Messenger of Allah.

...فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا...

then who could do more wrong than one who rejecteth Allah's signs, and turneth away therefrom?

...سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَصْدِفُونَ (١٥٧)

In good time shall We requite those who turn away from Our Signs, with a dreadful penalty, for their turning away.

...هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلاَّ أَن تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلآئِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ...

158. Are they waiting to see if the angels come to them, or thy Lord (Himself), or certain of the signs of thy Lord!

...أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لاَ يَنفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهَا...

the day that certain of the signs of thy Lord do come, no good will it do to a soul to believe in them then,

C983. There is no merit in faith in things that you are compelled to acknowledge when they actually happen.

Faith is belief in things which you do not see with your own eyes but you understand with your spiritual sense: if your whole will consents to it, it results in deeds of righteousness, which are the evidence of your faith.

...لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِن قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا...

if it believed not before nor earned righteousness through its Faith.

...قُلِ انتَظِرُواْ إِنَّا مُنتَظِرُونَ (١٥٨)

Say: "Wait ye: we too are waiting."

C984. The waiting in the two cases is in quite different senses:

- the foolish man without faith is waiting for things which will not happen, and is surprised by the real things which do happen;

- the righteous man of faith is waiting for the fruits of righteousness, of which he has an assured hope; in a higher state of spiritual elevation, even the fruits have no personal meaning to him, for Allah is to him in all: 6:162.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُواْ دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُواْ شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ...

159. As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least:

C985. Divide their religion: farraqu: i.e.,

1. make a distinction between one part of it and another, take the part which suits them and reject the rest; or
2. have religion one day of the week and the world the rest of the six days; or
3. keep "religion in its right place," as if it did not claim to govern the whole life; make a sharp distinction between the secular and the religious; or
4. show a sectarian bias, seek differences in views, so as to break up the unity of Islam.

...إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْعَلُونَ (١٥٩)

their affair is with Allah:

He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.

مَن جَاء بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا...

160. He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit:

...وَمَن جَاء بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلاَ يُجْزَى إِلاَّ مِثْلَهَا ...

he that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil.

C986. Allah is just as well as generous.

To the good the reward is multiplied ten times (i.e., far above the merits) on account of His generosity.

To the evil, the punishment is no more than commensurate with their sin, and even so the door of mercy is always open to those who sincerely repent and show it by their conduct.

... وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُونَ (١٦٠)

No wrong shall be done unto (any of) them.

قُلْ إِنَّنِي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا...

161. Say:

"Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight, a religion of right, the path (trod) by Abraham the true in faith,

...وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٦١)

and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah."

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلاَتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٢)

162. Say:

"Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds:

...لاَ شَرِيكَ لَهُ

163. No partner hath He:

...وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَاْ أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٦٣)

this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His Will.

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللّهِ أَبْغِي رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

164. Say:

"Shall I seek for (my) Cherisher other than Allah, when He is the Cherisher of all things (that exist)?"

...وَلاَ تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلاَّ عَلَيْهَا...

Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself:

C987. The doctrine of personal responsibility again. We are fully responsible for our acts ourselves: we cannot transfer the consequences to someone else. Nor can any one vicariously atone for our sins.

If people have honest doubts or differences about important questions of religion, they should not start futile disputes. All will be clear in the end.

Our duty here is to maintain unity and discipline, and do the duty that comes to us.

...وَلاَ تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى...

no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.

...ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٦٤)

Your goal in the end is toward Allah:

He will tell you the truth of the things wherein ye disputed.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلاَئِفَ الأَرْضِ...

165.It is He who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth:

C988. Cf. 2:30 and note, where I have translated **"Khalifah"** as "Vicegerent", it being Allah's Plan to make Adam (as representing mankind) His vicegerent on earth.

In C.1 I have construed the same word by the word "Agent."

Another idea implied in "Khalifah" is that of "successor, heir, or inheritor," i.e., one who has the ultimate ownership after the present possessors, to whom a life-tenancy has been given by the owner, have passed away.

In 15:23 occurs the striking word "heirs" (warithun) as applied to Allah: "We give life and death, and We are the Heirs (of Inheritors)."

The same idea occurs in 3:180, where see n. 485.

The translation here attempts to express both the ideas which I understand from the original.

...وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ...

He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that he may try you in the gifts He hath given you:

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٦٥)

for thy Lord is quick in punishment:

yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful



The Absolute Reality

وَإِذَا قُرِىءَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

This Qur'án is not such as can be produced by other than Allah;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

A'raf

الأَعْرَافِ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is closely connected, both chronologically and in respect of the argument, with the previous Surah. But it expounds the doctrine of revelation and man's spiritual history by illustrations from Adam onwards, through various Prophets, and the details of Moses' struggles, to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, in whom Allah's revelation is completed.

Summery- The note "learn from the past," is struck from the very beginning. The opposition of Evil to Good is illustrated by the story of Adam and Iblis. Arrogance leads to rebellion; the rebel is jealous and tempts the natural man, who is warned against deceit and all excess (7:1-31, C. 83).

If the warning is not heeded, the future penalties are indicated, while the privileges and the bliss and peace of the righteous are shown in a picture of the Hereafter, as well as in the power and goodness of Allah in the world that we see around us (7:32-58, C. 84).

The story of Noah and the Flood, and the stories of Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb, all point to the lesson that the Prophets were resisted and rejected, but truth triumphed in the end, and evil was humbled, for Allah's Plan never fails (7:59-99, C. 85).

The story of Moses is told in greater detail, not only in his struggles with Pharaoh, but in his preparations for his mission, and his struggles with his own rebellious people. Even from the time of Moses, the coming of the unlettered Prophet was foreshadowed (7:100-157, C. 86).

But the people of Moses frequently lapsed from Allah's Law as promulgated to them, and transgressed Allah's Covenant, and they were scattered through the earth in sections (7:158-171, C. 87).

The children of Adam have multiplied, but many of them have rejected truth and go by degrees to destruction in ways that they do not realise. The righteous listen to the Message of Allah, and serve Him in humility (7:172-206, C. 88).

C.83 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(7:1-31)

Revelation should ease the difficulties
Of heart and mind, for it tells
The story of man's spiritual past,
And teaches the end of good and evil.
Iblis fell from jealousy and arrogance,
And Adam fell because he listened
To his deceit. But Allah did grant
In His Mercy gifts and guidance
To men, warned them against excess
And taught them moderation and justice.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

المص (١)

1. Alif Lam Mim Sad.

C989. This is a combination of four Abbreviated Letters. For Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix I (at the end of Surah 2).

The combination here includes the three letters *Alif, Lam, Min*, which occurred at the beginning of Surah 2, and are discussed in n.25 to 2:1.

The additional letter *Sad* occurs in combination here and in Surah 19, and by itself -it the beginning of Surah 38, and nowhere else.

The factor common to Surah 7, Surah 19, and Surah 38, is that in each case the core of the Surah consists in the stories (qasas) of the Prophets.

In this Surah we have the Stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lut, Shu'ayb, and Moses, leading up to Muhammad, and in Surah 38, the stories of David Solomon, and Job similarly lead up to Muhammad, occupying three out of the five sections. Surah 19 consists almost entirely of such stories.

Can we understand *Sad* to stand for *qasas*, of which it is the most characteristic letter?

In this Surah 7, we have also the spiritual history of mankind traced-the Beginning the Middle, and the End, which as explained in n. 25, might be represented symbolically by *Alif, Lam, Min*. If so, this Surah, dealing with the Beginning, Middle, and the End of man's spiritual story, and illustrating it by the stories of the Prophets, might well be represented symbolically by the letters, *Alif, Lam, Mim, Sad*. But no one can dogmatic about these symbols. (R).

كِتَابٌ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ فَلاَ يَكُن فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ لِتُنذِرَ بِهِ...

2. A Book revealed unto thee, so let thy heart be oppressed no more by any difficulty on that account, that with it thou mightest warn (the erring)

C990. Heart: in the original, breast. I have used the word most appropriate to the English idiom.

The meaning is that Al-Mustafa is consoled for all the difficulties which he encountered in his mission, with the fact that he had clear guidance in the Book for his preaching.

...وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢)

and teach the believers.

اتَّبِعُواْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُواْ مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاء...

3. Follow (O men!) the revelation given unto you from your Lord, and follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him.

...قَلِيلاً مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٣)

Little it is ye remember of admonition.

C991. This is added in order that men might not be puffed up with such little knowledge as they possessed, for there are great heights to be scaled in the spiritual kingdom.

وَكَم مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا فَجَاءهَا بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا أَوْ هُمْ قَآئِلُونَ (٤)

4. How many towns have We destroyed (for their sins)?

Our punishment took them on a sudden by night or while they slept for their afternoon rest.

فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءهُمْ بَأْسُنَا إِلاَّ أَن قَالُواْ إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٥)

5. When (thus) our punishment took them, no cry did they utter but this:

"Indeed we did wrong."

C992. The spiritual story of man begins with a prelude. Think of the towns and nations ruined by their iniquity. Allah gave them many opportunities, and sent them

warners and teachers. But they arrogantly went on in their evil ways, till some dreadful calamity came and wiped out their traces.

In a warm climate the disturbance in the heat of the midday rest is even more than the disturbance at night. It was when the catastrophe came that the people realized their sins, but it was too late.

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٦)

6. Then shall We question those to whom Our Message was sent and those by whom We sent it.

C993. In the final reckoning, the warners and teachers will give evidence of their preaching the truth, and the wicked will themselves have to acknowledge the truth.

We picture it like a court scene, when the story is related, but the Judge knows all, even more than the parties can tell.

فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِم بِعِلْمٍ وَمَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِينَ (٧)

7. And verily We shall recount their whole story with knowledge, for We were never absent (at any time or place).

C994. Allah (being all-knowing) is never absent from any place or at any time, for Time and Place are relative conceptions for our limited natures, while He is the Absolute, independent of such relative conceptions. (R).

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ...

8. The balance that day will be true (to a nicety):

...فَمَن ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٨)

those whose scale (of good) will be heavy, will prosper.

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُواْ أَنفُسَهُم...

9. Those whose scale will be light, will find their souls in perdition,

...بِمَا كَانُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا يظْلِمُونَ (٩)

for that they wrongfully treated our signs.

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ...

10. It is We who have placed you with authority on earth, and provided you therein with means for the fulfillment of your life:

C995. That is, all the material things which are necessary to sustain, beautify, and refine life, as well as all those powers, faculties, and opportunities which are instrumental in bringing up life to a higher plane and preparing man for his high destiny.

...قَلِيلاً مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (١٠)

small are the thanks that ye give!

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ...

11. It is We who created you and gave you shape;

C996. Shape or form must be interpreted not only to refer to the physical form, which changes day by day, but also the various forms or shapes which our ideal and spiritual existence may take from time to time according to our inner experience; Cf. 82:8.

It was after Adam (as standing for all mankind) had been so taught that the angels were asked to prostrate to him, for, by Allah's grace, his status had actually been raised higher.

Note the transition from "you" (plural) in the first clause to "Adam" in the second clause: Adam and mankind are synonymous: the plural is reverted to in 7:14, 16-18. (R).

... ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلآئِكَةِ اسْجُدُواْ لآدَمَ فَسَجَدُواْ إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ...

then We bade the angels bow down to Adam, and they bowed down; not so Iblis;

...لَمْ يَكُن مِّنَ السَّاجِدِينَ (١١)

he refused to be of those who bow down.

C997. Iblis not only refused to bow down: he refused to be of those who prostrated.

In other words he arrogantly despised the angels who prostrated as well as man to whom they prostrated and he was in rebellion against Allah for not obeying His order.

Arrogance, jealousy, and rebellion were his triple crime.

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلاَّ تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ...

12. (Allah) said: "What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?"

...قَالَ أَنَاْ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ...

He said:

"I am better than he:

...خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ (١٢)

thou didst create me from fire and him from clay."

C998. Notice the subtle wiles of Iblis: his egotism in putting himself above man, and his falsehood in ignoring the fact that Allah had not merely made man's body from clay, but had given him spiritual form, - in other words, had taught him the nature of things and raised him above the angels.

قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ أَن تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا ...

13. (Allah) said:

"Get thee down from this: it is not for thee to be arrogant here:

C999. "This": the situation as it was then- a rebellious creature impertinent to His Creator. At every step Iblis falls lower;

- arrogance,
- jealousy,
- disobedience,
- egotism and
- untruth.

فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ (١٣)...

get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures)."

قَالَ فَأَنظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٤)

14. He said: "Give me respite till the day they are raised up."

قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ (١٥)

15. (Allah) said: "Be thou among those who have respite."

C1000. Are there others under respite?

Yes, Iblis has a large army of wicked seducers, and those men who are their dupes. For though degradation takes effect at once, its appearance may be long delayed.

قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (١٦)

16. He said:

"Because Thou hast thrown me out of the way, lo! I will lie in wait for them on Thy straight way.

C1001. Another instance of Iblis's subtlety and falsehood.

He waits till he gets the respite. Then he breaks out into a lie and impertinent defiance.

- The lie is in suggesting that Allah had thrown him out of the Way, in other words misled him: whereas his own conduct was responsible for his degradation.
- The defiance is in his setting snares on the Straight Way to which Allah directs men.

Iblis now falls a step lower than the five steps mentioned in n. 999. His sixth step is defiance.

ثُمَّ لَآتِيَنَّهُم مِّن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَن شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ...

17. "Then will I assault them from before them and behind them from their right and their left:

وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ (١٧)...

nor wilt Thou find, in most of them, gratitude (for Thy mercies).

C1002. The assault of evil is from all sides. It takes advantage of every weak point, and sometimes even our good and generous sympathies are used to decoy us into the snares of evil.

Man has every reason to be grateful to Allah for all His loving care and yet man in his folly forgets his gratitude and does the very opposite of what he should do.

قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْؤُومًا مَّدْحُورًا...

18. (Allah) said:

"Get out from this, disgraced and expelled.

...لَّمَن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لأَمْلأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٨)

If any of them follow thee, hell will I fill with you all."

وَيَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ ...

19. O Adam!

dwell thou and thy wife in the garden,

C1003. Now the story turns to man. He was placed in the Garden of innocence and bliss, but it was Allah's Plan to give him a limited faculty of choice.

All that he was forbidden to do was to approach the Tree, but he succumbed to Satan's suggestions. (R).

فَكُلاَ مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا... ...

and enjoy (its good things) as ye wish:

C1004. Enjoy: literally, "eat."

Cf. the meaning of *taama* in 6:14, n. 847 and *akala* in and 5:66, n. 776.

...وَلاَ تَقْرَبَا هَـذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٩)

but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression."

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ ...

20. Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them,

C1005. The transition from the name "Iblis" to the name **"Satan"** is similar to that in 2:36, where it is explained in n. 52.

... لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِن سَوْءَاتِهِمَا...

bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before):

C1006. Our first parents as created by Allah (and this applies to all of us) were innocent in matters material as well as spiritual. They knew no evil. But the faculty of choice, which was given to them and which raised them above the angels, also implied that they had the capacity of evil, which by the training of their own will, they were to reject.

They were warned of the danger. When they fell, they realized the evil. They were (and we are) still given the chance, in this life on a lower plane, to make good and recover the lost status of innocence and bliss.

...وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَـذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ...

he said "Your Lord only forbade you this tree,

...إِلاَّ أَن تَكُونَا مَلَكَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ (٢٠)

lest ye should become angels or such beings as live for ever."

وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ (٢١)

21. And he swore to them both, that he was their sincere adviser.

فَدَلاَّهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ...

22. So by deceit he brought about their fall:

...فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْءَاتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِن

وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ...

when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies.

...وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَن تِلْكُمَا الشَّجَرَةِ...

And their Lord called unto them:

"Did I not forbid you that tree,

...وَأَقُل لَّكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٢٢)

and tell you that Satan was an avowed enemy unto you?"

... قَالاَ

23. They said:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا
وَتَرْحَمْنَا

لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

"Our Lord!

we have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy mercy, we shall certainly be lost."

...قَالَ اهْبِطُواْ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ

24. (Allah) said:

"Get ye down, with enmity between yourselves.

...وَلَكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ (٢٤)

On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood, for a time."

قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ (٢٥)

25. He said:

"Therein shall ye live, and therein shall ye die; but from it shall ye be taken out (at last)."

C1007. Cf. this whole passage about Adam with the passage in 2:30-39, and with other passages in subsequent Surahs. In places the words are precisely the same, and yet the whole argument is different. In each case it exactly fits the context.

In Surah 2, the argument was about the origin of man. Here the argument is a prelude to his history on earth, and so it continues logically in the next section to address the Children of Adam, and goes on afterwards with the story of the various prophets that came to guide mankind.

Truth is one, but its apt presentment in words shows a different facet in different contexts.

Section 3

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُوَارِي سَوْءَاتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا...

26. O ye children of Adam!

We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you,

C1008. There is a double philosophy of clothes here, to correspond with the double signification of verse 20 above, as explained in n. 1006.

Spiritually, Allah created man "bare and alone" (6:94): the soul in its naked purity and beauty knew no shame because it knew no guilt: after it was touched by guilt and soiled by evil, its thoughts and deeds became its clothing and adornments, good or bad, honest or meretricious, according to the inner motives, which gave them colour.

So in the case of the body: it is pure and beautiful, as long as it is not defiled by misuse: its clothing and ornaments may be good or meretricious, according to the motives in the mind and character: if good, they are the symbols of purity and beauty: but the best clothing and ornament we could have comes from righteousness, which covers the nakedness of sin, and adorns us with virtues. (R).

...وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىَ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ...

but the raiment of righteousness, that is the best.

...ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (٢٦)

Such are among the signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition!

...يَا بَنِي آدَمَ لاَ يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ

27. O ye children of Adam!

let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as he got your parents out of the garden,

C1009. That is, by fraud and deceit, - by putting you off your guard and telling lies.

Adam's story here becomes an introduction to the later religious history of mankind: 7:20-22. In the Garden, Satan's deceit stripped off their raiment of honour and innocence.

In this life on a lower plane he seeks to strip us of the raiment of righteousness. And he can take up positions on a vantage ground of worldly power or influence or riches, in which he and his confederates are not seen in their true colours. They may assume a fair-seeming disguise of disinterested friendship or high motives of patriotism or public spirit, or loyalty to ancestors, when beneath it there is nothing but spite and selfishness.

...يَنزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْءَاتِهِمَا...

stripping them of their raiment, to expose their shame:

...إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ تَرَوْنَهُمْ...

for he and his tribe watch you from a position where ye cannot see them:

...إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاء لِلَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٧)

We made the evil ones friends (only) to those without faith.

وَإِذَا فَعَلُواْ فَاحِشَةً قَالُواْ وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءنَا وَاللّهُ أَمَرَنَا بِهَا...

28. When they do aught that is shameful, they say:

"We found our fathers doing so;" and "Allah commanded us thus":

...قُلْ إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاء...

say:

"Nay Allah never commands what is shameful:

...أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٨)

do ye say of Allah what ye know not?"

قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ...

29. Say:

"My Lord hath commanded justice;

...وَأَقِيمُواْ وُجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ...

and that ye set your whole selves (to him) at every time and place of prayer, and call upon him, making your devotion sincere as in his sight:

C1010. For **wajh**, see 2:112 and n. 114.

Our devotion should be sincere, not as in other men's sight, but by presenting our whole selves, heart and soul, to Allah. Even so, it may not be enough; for the sight of our heart and soul may be faulty.

We should call upon Allah to give us the light, by which our sincerity may commend itself to Him as true sincerity "as in His sight"

...كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ (٢٩)

such as he created you in the beginning, so shall ye return."

C1011. Cf. 6:94.

Our sincerity should be real sincerity, as in His sight for when we return to Him, we shall be stripped of all pretence, even such self-deception as may satisfy us in this life.

...فَرِيقًا هَدَى وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ

30. Some He hath guided:

others have (by their choice) deserved the loss of their way:

C1012. Guidance is for all. But in some it takes effect: in others the doors are closed against it, because they have taken Satan for their friend.

If they have lost their way, they have richly deserved it; for they deliberately took their choice, even though, in their self-righteousness, they may think that their sin is their virtue, and that their Evil is their Good.

...إِنَّهُمُ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاء مِن دُونِ اللّهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُم

مُّهْتَدُونَ (٣٠)

in that they took the evil ones, in preference to Allah, for their friends and protectors, and think that they receive guidance.

... يَا بَنِي آدَمَ

31. O children of Adam!

... خُذُواْ زِينَتَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وكُلُواْ وَاشْرَبُواْ وَلاَ تُسْرِفُواْ...

wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink:

but waste not by excess,

C1013. Beautiful apparel: zinat: adornments or apparel for beautiful living:

construed to mean not only clothes that add grace to the wearer, but toilet and cleanliness, attention to hair, and other small personal details which no self-respecting man or woman ought to neglect when going solemnly even before a great human dignitary, if only out of respect for the dignity of the occasion. How much more important it is to attend to these details when we solemnly apply our minds to the Presence of Allah.

But the caution against excess applies: men must not go to prayer in silks or ornaments appropriate to women. Similarly sober food, good and wholesome, is not to be divorced from offices of religion; only the caution against excess applies strictly. A dirty, unkempt, slovenly Faqir could not claim sanctity in Islam. (R).

إِنَّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (٣١)...

for Allah loveth not the wasters.

C.84 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(7:32-58)

Allah has forbidden the things
That are evil, not those that are good,
For these were created for man's
Enjoyment. The transgressors
Are those who reject Allah's Signs.
They will have no share in the Bliss
Of the Hereafter. But the righteous
Will dwell in Peace, and the Hope
That was promised will be theirs.

Section 4

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِيَ أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ...

32. Say:

Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He hath produced for his servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance?

C1014. Asceticism often means the negation of art and beauty, it has no necessary sanctity attached to it.

...قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

Say:

they are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment.

C1015. The beautiful and good things of life are really meant for, and should be the privilege of those with faith in Allah.

If they do not always have them in this life, and if there is sometimes the semblance of others having them who do not deserve them, let us at least consider the matter in another light. Our Faith in Allah's wisdom is unshaken and we know that these are but fleeting and mixed types of the things in the spiritual world.

Their pure counterparts in the spirituals world will be only for those who proved in all the trials of this world, that they had faith.

...كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٢)

Thus do We explain the signs in detail for those who understand.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ ...

33. Say: The things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are:

C1016. The forbidden things are described in four categories:

1. what is shameful or unbecoming; the sort of things which have also legal and social sanctions, not of a

local but of a universal kind; they may be called offences against society:

2. sins against self and trespasses or excesses of every sort; these are against truth and reason; here would come in indiscipline, failure in doing intangible duties not clearly defined by law; selfishness or self-aggrandizement, which may be condoned by custom and not punished by law, etc.-
3. erecting fetishes or false gods; this is treason against the true God; and
4. corrupting religion by debasing superstitions, etc.

... الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ...

- shameful deeds, whether open or secret;

...وَالإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَن تُشْرِكُواْ بِاللّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا...

- sins and trespasses against truth or reason;
- assigning of partners to Allah, for which he hath given no authority;

...وَأَن تَقُولُواْ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٣)

- and saying things about Allah of which ye have no knowledge.

...وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ...

34. To every people is a term appointed:

C1017. People: ummah. I do not know whether "generation" would not be more appropriate here. If so, it would refer to the Time-Spirit, for it affects a whole number of people living contemporaneously, and while we deal grammatically with a group, we really have in mind the individuals composing the group. Anyway, the lesson is what is suggested in the following verses.

There is only a limited time for an individual or for a group of people. If they do not make good during that time of probation, the chance is lost, and it cannot come

again. We cannot retard or advance the march of time by a single hour or minute.

("Hour" in the text expresses an indefinite but short period of time).

...فَإِذَا جَاء أَجَلُهُمْ لاَ يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلاَ يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ (٣٤)

when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation).

...يَا بَنِي آدَمَ إِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي

35. O ye children of Adam!

whenever there come to you Messengers from amongst you, rehearsing my signs unto you,

...فَمَنِ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٣٥)

those who are righteous and mend (their lives), on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُواْ عَنْهَا أُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا

خَالِدُونَ (٣٦)

36. But those who reject our signs and treat them with arrogance, they are companions of the fire, to dwell therein (for ever).

...فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ

37. Who is more unjust than one who invents a lie against Allah or rejects his signs?

...أُوْلَـئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيبُهُم مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ

For such, their portion appointed must reach them from the Book (of decrees);

C1018. It must not be supposed that the rebels against Allah would at once be cut off in this life for their sins. They will get the portion allotted to them, including the good things of life and the chance of repentance and

reformation, during their probationary period on this earth.

During that period they will have a full run. After that period expires, they will be called to account. They will themselves see that the false things, in which they put their trust, were false, and they will confess their sin, but it will be too late.

...حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ قَالُوا أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

until, when Our messengers (of death) arrive and take their souls, they say:

"Where are the things that ye used to invoke besides Allah?"

...قَالُوا ضَلُّوا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ (٣٧)

They will reply, "They have left us in the lurch,"

and they will bear witness against themselves, that they had rejected Allah.

...قَالَ ادْخُلُوا فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِكُم مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ فِي النَّارِ...

38. He will say: "Enter ye in the company of the peoples who passed away before you, men and Jinns, into the fire.

...كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا...

Every time a new people enters, it curses its sister-people (that went before),

...حَتَّى إِذَا ادَّارَكُوا فِيهَا جَمِيعًا قَالَتْ أُخْرَاهُمْ لأُولاَهُمْ...

until they follow each other, all into the fire.

Saith the last about the first:

...رَبَّنَا هَـؤُلاء أَضَلُّونَا فَآتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا مِّنَ النَّارِ...

"Our Lord! it is these that misled us: so give them a double penalty in the fire."

C1019. The earlier generations committed a double crime:

- their own sins,
- the bad example they set for those that followed.

We are responsible not only for our own misdeeds, but for those which our example and our teaching to our juniors may induce them to commit. But it does not lie in the mouth of the juniors to ask for a double punishment for seniors: the motive is not justice, but pure spite, which is itself a sin.

Further, the later generations have to answer for two things:

- their own sins, and
- their failure to learn from the past, from the experiences of those who preceded them. They should have an advantage in this respect, being "in the foremost files of Time," but they did not learn.

Thus there was nothing to choose between the earlier and later generations in the matter of guilt. But how few people understand this!

In 6:160, we were told that good was rewarded tenfold, but evil was punished according to its guilt, in perfect justice. This verse is in no way inconsistent with it. Two crimes must have a double penalty. (R).

...قَالَ لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ وَلَـكِن لاَّ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٨)

He will say: "Doubled for all":

but this Ye do not understand.

...وَقَالَتْ أُولاَهُمْ لأُخْرَاهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِن فَضْلٍ

39. Then the first will say to the last:

"See then! no advantage have ye over us;

...فَذُوقُواْ الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ (٣٩)

so taste ye of the penalty for all that ye did!"

C1020. Wrong-doers have really no sense of honour towards each other. "Honour among thieves" is an exceptional, not an ordinary, experience.

In real life, guilt and crime are apt to indulge in mean spite and bitter recriminations against accomplices.

Section 5

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُواْ عَنْهَا...

40. To those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance,

لاَ تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاء وَلاَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ...

no opening will there be of the gates of heaven nor will they enter the garden, until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle:

...وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٤٠)

such is Our reward for those in sin.

لَهُم مِّن جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِن فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ...

41. For them there is hell, as a couch (below) and folds and folds of covering above:

...وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٤١)

such is Our requital of those who do wrong.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ لاَ نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا...

42. But those who believe and work righteousness, no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear,

...أُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٤٢)

they will be companions of the garden, therein to dwell (for ever).

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهِمُ الأَنْهَارُ...

43. And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury; beneath them will be rivers flowing;

C1021. A man who may have suffered or been disappointed may have a lurking sense of injury it the back of his mind, which may spoil his enjoyment on account of past memory intruding in the midst of felicity.

In such cases memory itself is pain. Even sorrow is intensified by memory: as Tennyson says,

"A sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things."

But that is in this our imperfect life. In the perfect felicity of the righteous, all such feelings will be blotted out. No "heartaches" then and no memories of them! The clouds of the past will have dissolved in glorious light, and no past happiness will be comparable with the perfect happiness which will have then been attained. Nor will any sense of envy or shortcoming be possible in that perfect bliss.

...وَقَالُواْ الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَـذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللّهُ...

and they shall say:

"Praise be to Allah, Who hath guided us to this (felicity): never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah:

...لَقَدْ جَاءتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ...

indeed it was the truth that the Messengers of our Lord brought unto us."

...وَنُودُواْ أَن تِلْكُمُ الْجَنَّةُ أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٤٣)

And they shall hear the cry:

"Behold! the garden before you! Ye have been made its inheritors, for your deeds (of righteousness)."

C1022. Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth": Matt. 5:5.

Here we are told: blessed are the righteous, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. The stress here is on actual practical deeds of righteousness: whether they find their rewards on earth or not is immaterial: their attention is directed to an infinitely greater reward, the kingdom of heaven.

In the Sermon on the Mount this is promised to the "poor in spirit": Matt. 5:3.

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَن قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا

حَقًّا...

44. The companions of the garden will call out to the companions of the fire:

"We have indeed found the promises of our Lord to us true:

...فَهَلْ وَجَدتُّم مَّا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا...

have you also found your Lord's promises true?"

...قَالُواْ نَعَمْ ...

They shall say, "Yes;"

...فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ ...

but a crier shall proclaim between them:

C1023. The Companions of the Fire can only answer a single word, "Yes," such is their state of misery. Even so, their voice is drowned in the voice of the Crier, who explains their state: they are in a state of curse, that is, deprivation of the grace and mercy of Allah. Such deprivation is the highest misery that souls can suffer.

... أَن لَّعْنَةُ اللّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٤)

"The curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers;

الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَهُم بِالآخِرَةِ

كَافِرُونَ (٤٥)

45. "Those who would hinder (men) from the path of Allah and would seek in it something crooked: they were those who Denied the Hereafter."

C1024. The unrighteous reflect their own crooked minds when the path of Allah is before them. Instead of going straight, they try to find something in it that suits their own crooked ideas. Frankly they have no faith in the final Goal, the Hereafter.

وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ...

46. Between them shall be a veil,

...وَعَلَى الأَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَعْرِفُونَ كُلاًّ بِسِيمَاهُمْ...

and on the heights will be men who would know everyone by his marks:

C1025. This is a difficult passage, and Commentators have interpreted it in different ways. Three distinct schools of thought may be discerned in the interpretation.

1. One school thinks that the men on the Heights are angels, or such men of exalted spiritual dignity (e.g., the great prophets), as will be able to know the souls at sight as regards their real worth:

   the Heights will be their exalted stations, from which they will welcome the righteous with a salutation of peace, even before the righteous have entered heaven; the salutation of peace being itself an assurance of salvation to those whom they salute.

2. Another school of thought thinks that the men on the Heights are such souls as are not decidedly on the side of merit or decidedly on the side of sin, but evenly balanced on a partition between heaven and hell.

   Their case is yet to be decided, but their salutation to the righteous is a wistful salutation, because they hope for Allah's Mercy.

3. The third line of interpretation, with which I agree, is close to the first, with this exception, that the partition and the Heights are figurative. The higher souls will rejoice at the approaching salvation of the righteous.

...وَنَادَوْاْ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَن سَلاَمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ...

they will call out to the companions of the garden, "Peace on you"

...لَمْ يَدْخُلُوهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ (٤٦)

they will not have entered, but they will have an assurance (thereof).

وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَاءَ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ...

47. When their eyes shall be turned towards the companions of the fire,

C1026. Their eyes: according to interpretation 2 of the last note, "their" would refer to the people whose fate has not yet been decided, and the speech would be theirs;

according to interpretations 1 and 3 in that note, "their" would refer to the Companions of the Garden, who would realise the terrible nature of hell, and express their horror of it. I prefer the latter.

Then the mention of the "men on the Heights" and their speech in verse 48 comes in naturally as a different kind of speech from a different kind of men.

...قَالُواْ رَبَّنَا لاَ تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٧)

they will say: "Our Lord! send us not to the company of the wrongdoers."

Section 6

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الأَعْرَافِ رِجَالاً يَعْرِفُونَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ...

48. The men on the heights will call to certain men whom they will know from their marks,

...قَالُواْ مَا أَغْنَى عَنكُمْ جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٤٨)

saying: "Of what profit to you were you hoards and your arrogant ways?

C1027. This speech is in three parts:

1. the last lines of this verse are addressed to the Companions of the Fire, reminding them (as a bench of judges might speak to a prisoner) of the futility of their wealth and riches and arrogance in their earthly life:
2. the second part, in the first half of verse 49, recalls to their minds how false was their contempt of the

good but lowly men who are now to be the inheritors of heaven: and

3. the latter part of verse 49, "enter ye the Garden" is addressed to the Blessed, to give them a welcome to their state of felicity.

أَهَـؤُلاء الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لاَ يَنَالُهُمُ اللّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ...

49. "Behold! are these not the men whom you swore that Allah with His mercy would never bless?

...ادْخُلُواْ الْجَنَّةَ لاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلاَ أَنتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ (٤٩)

Enter ye the garden:

no fear shall be on you, nor shall ye grieve."

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِيضُواْ عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَاء أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّهُ...

50. The companions of the fire will call to the companions of the garden;

"Pour down to us water or anything that Allah doth provide for your sustenance."

...قَالُواْ إِنَّ اللّهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٠)

They will say:

"Both these things hath Allah forbidden to those who rejected Him.

C1028. The Companions of the Fire will thirst for water and not get it, and for sustenance which will not be theirs, while the Companions of the Garden will have the crystal waters of the springs and rivers and they will enjoy the bliss of Allah's Countenance, which will be their supreme nourishment and the fruit of their life of probation and seeking. These things will not be transferable.

Cf. also 37:41-47, 62-67. (R).

الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُواْ دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا...

51. "Such as took their religion to be mere amusement and play, and were deceived by the life of the world."

...فَالْيَوْمَ نَنسَاهُمْ كَمَا نَسُواْ لِقَاء يَوْمِهِمْ هَـذَا...

That day shall We forget them as they forgot the meeting of this day of theirs,

C1029. "Forgetfulness" may be involuntary, from a defect of memory, or figuratively, a deliberate turning away from, or ignoring of, something we do not want, as when we say in an argument, "you conveniently forget that so- and-so is so-and-so." Here the latter kind is meant.

If men deliberately ignored the Hereafter in spite of warnings, can they expect to be received by Allah, Whom they themselves rejected?

...وَمَا كَانُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ (٥١)

and as they were wont to reject Our signs.

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُم بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ...

52. For We had certainly sent unto them a Book, based on knowledge, which We explained in detail,

...هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢)

a guide and a mercy to all who believe.

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلاَّ تَأْوِيلَهُ ...

53. Do they just wait for the final fulfillment of the event?

... يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلُهُ...

On the day the event is finally fulfilled,

C1030. If those without Faith want to wait and see what happens in the Hereafter, they will indeed learn the truth, but it will be too late for them to profit by it then. All the false ideals and false gods which they put their trust upon will leave them in the lurch.

If they thought that the goodness or greatness of others would help them, they will be undeceived on the day when their personal responsibility will be enforced. There will be no salvation except on their own record. How they will then wish that they had another chance! But their chance will be gone.

...يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ نَسُوهُ مِن قَبْلُ قَدْ جَاءتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ...

those who disregarded it before will say:

"The Messengers of our Lord did indeed bring true (tidings).

...فَهَل لَّنَا مِن شُفَعَاء فَيَشْفَعُواْ لَنَا أَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ...

Have we no intercessors now to intercede on our behalf?

Or could we be sent back? Then should we behave differently from our behavior in the past."

...قَدْ خَسِرُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ (٥٣)

In fact they will have lost their souls, and the things they invented will leave them in the lurch.

Section 7

...إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ

54. Your Guardian-Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days,

C1031. A sublime verse, comparable to the Throne Verse 2:255.

The Creation in six Days is of course metaphorical. In 45:14, "the Days of Allah" refer not so much to time as to the growth in us of a spiritual sense, a sense of sin and a sense of Allah's Mercy.

In 22:47, we are told that a Day in the sight of Allah is like a thousand years of our reckoning, and in 70:4, the comparison is with 50,000 of our years.

In the history of our material earth, we may reckon six great epochs of evolution.

The significance of the figure **six** will be discussed in connection with 41:9:12, where the ,matter is referred to in more detail.

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...

and is firmly established on the throne (of authority):

C1032. Here, we are told of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days. But lest we should be obsessed with the Jewish idea that Allah rested on the seventh day, we are told that the Creation was but a prelude to Allah's work: for His authority is exercised constantly by the laws which He establishes and enforces in all parts of His Creation.

The beautiful imagery of night and day seeking out each other in rapid succession is still further enforced in the Arabic by the double accusative of the verb *yugshi*, showing the mutual interactions of the day and the night, each covering the other in turn. The heavenly bodies show an order which is evidence of His constant care and government.

Not only that, but it is only He Who creates, maintains, and governs, and no one else. (R).

يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا...

He draweth the night as a veil O'er the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession:

وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ...

He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, (all) governed by laws under His command.

أَلاَ لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٥٤)...

Is it not His to create and to govern?

Blessed be Allah, the cherisher and sustainer of the worlds!

ادْعُواْ رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً...

55. Call on your Lord with humility and in private:

C1033. In prayer, we must avoid any arrogance or show or loudness, or vanity of requests or words.

If excess is condemned in all things, it is specially worthy of condemnation when we go humbly before our Lord,- we poor creatures before the Omnipotent Who knoweth all.

...إِنَّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (٥٥)

for Allah loveth not those who trespass beyond bounds.

... وَلاَ تُفْسِدُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلاَحِهَا

56. Do no mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order,

C1034. The man who prays with humility and earnestness finds the ground prepared by Allah for his spiritual advancement. It is all set in order, and cleared of weeds. He does not, like the wicked, upset that order, to introduce evil or mischief into it.

... وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا...

but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts):

C1035. Fear and longing: the fear of Allah is really a fear lest we should diverge from His Will, or do anything which would not be pleasing to Him:

unlike ordinary fear, it therefore brings us nearer to Allah, and in fact nourishes our longing and desire for Him.

...إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٦)

for the mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.

...وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ

57. It is He who sendeth the winds like heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy:

C1036. The Parable is complete in its triple significance.

1. In the physical world the winds go like heralds of glad tidings; they are the advance guard, behind

which is coming the great army of winds driving heavily laden clouds before it; the wise Providence of Allah is their General, who directs them towards a parched land, on which the clouds deliver their gladdening showers of mercy, which convert the dead land into a living, fertile, and beautiful land bearing a rich harvest.

2. In the spiritual world, the winds are the great motive forces in the mind of man, or in the world around him, that bring the clouds or instruments of Allah's Mercy, which descend and fertilize souls hitherto spiritually dead.

3. If we can see or experience such things in our life here below, can we doubt the resurrection?

...حَتَّى إِذَا أَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالاً سُقْنَاهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ...

when they have carried the heavy-laden clouds, We drive them to a land that is dead,

...فَأَنزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاء فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ...

make rain to descend thereon, and produce every kind of harvest therewith:

...كَذَلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْموْتَى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٥٧)

thus shall We raise up the dead:

perchance ye may remember.

...وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ...

58. From the land that is clean and good, by the will of its Cherisher, springs up produce, (rich) after its kind:

C1037. The triple parable explained in the last note is here continued.

1. In the physical world, the fertilising showers of rain yield a rich harvest on good soil, but bad soil yields little or nothing.

2. In the spiritual world, also, Allah's Mercies evoke no response in some souls which have chosen evil.

3. In the final reckoning, though all will be raised, not all will achieve the fulfilment of their lives.

...وَالَّذِي خَبُثَ لاَ يَخْرُجُ إِلاَّ نَكِدًا...

but from the land that is bad, spring up nothing but that which is niggardly:

...كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ (٥٨)

thus do We explain the signs by various (symbols) to those who are grateful.

C1038. Those who are grateful are those who joyfully receive Allah's Message, and respond to it by deeds of righteousness.

C.85 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(7:59-99)

Noah's warning was rejected by his
Generation, and they were destroyed
In the Flood. Hud was defied
By his own people 'Ad, but they were
Swept away by a terrible blast.
Their successors, the Thamud, were puffed up
With pride and injustice, but behold!
An earthquake buried them for their sins
After Salih had warned them from Allah.
With a rain of brimstone and fire
Were overwhelmed the Cities of the Plain
For their unexampled lusts, against which
Lut did warn them. The people of Midian
Were given to mischief and fraud; Shu'ayb
Did warn them, but they heeded not,
And perished in an earthquake.
Allah's punishment is sure for wickedness and sin.

Section 8

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ ...

59. We sent Noah to his people.

C1039. The story of Noah in greater detail will be found in 11:25-48.

Here the scheme is to tell briefly the stories of some of the Prophets between Noah and Moses, and lead up thus to a lesson for the contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad himself.

When Noah attacked the wickedness of his generation, he was laughed at for a madman, for he mentioned the Great Day to come in the Hereafter. Allah's retribution came soon afterwards-the great Flood, in which his unbelieving people were drowned, but he and those who believed in him and came, into the Ark were saved.

... فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ...

He said: "O my people!

...اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَـهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

worship Allah! Ye have no other god but Him.

...إِنِّيَ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٥٩)

I fear for you the punishment of a dreadful day!"

قَالَ الْمَلأُ مِن قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٦٠)

60. The leaders of his people said: "Ah! we see thee evidently wandering (in mind)."

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦١)

61. He said:

"O my people! no wandering is there in my (mind):

on the contrary I am a Messenger from the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds!

أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالاَتِ رَبِّي وَأَنصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٦٢)

62. "I but fulfil towards you the duties of my Lord's mission:
sincere is my advice to you,
and I know from Allah something that ye know not.

أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ ...

63. "Do ye wonder that there hath come to you a message from your Lord, through a man of your own people,

...لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُواْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٦٣)

to warn you, so that ye may fear Allah and haply receive his mercy?"

فَكَذَّبُوهُ ...

64. But they rejected him

...فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ...

and We delivered him, and those with him, in the ark:

...وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا...

But We overwhelmed in the flood those who rejected our signs.

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ قَوْماً عَمِينَ (٦٤)

They were indeed a blind people!

Section 9

وَإِلَى عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُوداً ...

65. To the Ad people, (We sent) Hud, one of their (own) brethren:

C1040. The 'Ad people, with their prophet Hud, are mentioned in many places. See especially 26:123-140, and 46:21-26.

Their story belongs to Arabian tradition. Their eponymous ancestor 'Ad was fourth in generation from Noah, having been a son of 'Aus, the son of Aram, the son of Sam, the son of Noah.

They occupied a large tract of country in Southern Arabia, extending from Umman at the mouth of the Arabian Gulf to Hadhramaut and Yemen at the southern end of the Red Sea. The people were tall in stature and were great builders. Probably the long, winding tracts of sands (ahqaf) in their dominions (46:21) were irrigated with canals.

They forsook the true God, and oppressed their people. A three years famine visited them, but yet they took no warning. At length a terrible blast of wind destroyed them and their land, but a remnant, known as the second 'Ad or the Thamud (see below) were saved, and afterwards suffered a similar fate for their sins.

The tomb of the Prophet Hud (qabr Nabi Hud) is still traditionally shown in Hadhramaut, latitude 16 N, and longitude 49 1/2 E', about 90 miles north of Mukalla. There are ruins and inscriptions in the neighbourhood.

See "Hadhramaut, Some of its Mysteries Unveiled," by D. van der Meulen and H. von Wissmann, Leyden, 1932. (R).

... قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ...

He said:

"O my people!

...اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَـهٍ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلاَ تَتَّقُونَ (٦٥)

worship Allah! ye have no other god but Him.

Will yet not fear (Allah)?"

...قَالَ الْمَلأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن قَوْمِهِ

66. The leaders of the unbelievers among his people said:

...إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٦٦)

"Ah! we see thou art an imbecile!" and

"We think thou art a liar!"

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٧)

67. He said:

"O my people! I am not imbecile, but (I am) a Messenger from the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds!

أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَاْ لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ (٦٨)

68. "I but fulfil towards your the duties of my Lord's mission:

I am to you a sincere and trustworthy adviser.

أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ...

69. "Do ye wonder that there hath come to you a message from your Lord through a man of your own people, to warn you?

...وَاذْكُرُواْ إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاء مِن بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ

...بَسْطَةً

Call in remembrance that he made you inheritors after the people of Noah, and gave you a stature tall among the nations.

...فَاذْكُرُواْ آلاء اللّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٦٩)

Call in remembrance the benefits (ye have received) from Allah:

that so Ye may prosper."

...قَالُواْ أَجِئْتَنَا لِنَعْبُدَ اللّهَ وَحْدَهُ وَنَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا

70. They said:

"Comest thou to us, that we may worship Allah alone, and give up the cult of our fathers?

...فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٧٠)

Bring us what thou threatenest us with, if so be that thou tellest the truth!"

...قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ

71. He said:

"Punishment and wrath have already come upon you from your Lord:

C1041. The past tense may be understood in three ways.

1. A terrible famine had already afflicted the 'Ad as a warning before they were overwhelmed in the final blast of hot wind (see the last note).
2. The terrible insolence and sin into which they had fallen was itself a punishment.
3. The prophetic past is used, as much as to say: "Behold! I see a dreadful calamity: it is already on you!"

...أَتُجَادِلُونَنِي فِي أَسْمَاء سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُم مَّا نَزَّلَ اللّهُ بِهَا

...مِن سُلْطَانٍ

dispute ye with me over names which ye have devised, ye and your fathers, without authority from Allah?

C1042. Why dispute over names and imaginary gods, the inventions of your minds? Come to realities. If you ask for the punishment and are waiting in insolent defiance, what can I do but also wait? -in fear and trembling for you, for I know that Allah's punishment is sure!

...فَانتَظِرُواْ إِنِّي مَعَكُم مِّنَ الْمُنتَظِرِينَ (٧١)

Then wait: I am amongst you, also waiting."

...فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا

72. We saved him and those who adhered to him, by our mercy,

...وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا وَمَا كَانُواْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٧٢)

and We cut off the roots of those who rejected our signs and did not believe.

Section 10

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ...

73. To the Thamud people (We sent) Salih, one of their own brethren:

C1043. The Thamud people were the successors to the culture and civilization of the 'Ad people, for whom see n. 1040 and 7:65 above.

They were cousins to the 'Ad, apparently a younger branch of the same race.

Their story also belongs to Arabian tradition, according to which their eponymous ancestor Thamud was a son of 'Abir (a brother of Aram), the son of Sam, the son of Noah.

Their scat was in the north-west corner of Arabia (Arabia Petraea), between Madinah and Syria. It included both rocky country (hijr, 15:80), and the spacious fertile valley (Wadi) and plains country of Qura, which begins just north of the City of Madinah and is traversed by the Hijaz Railway.

When the holy Prophet in the 9th year of the Hijrah led his expedition to Tabuk (about 400 miles north of Madinah) against the Roman forces, on a reported Roman invasion from Syria, he and his men came across the archaeological remains of the Thamud. The recently excavated rock city of Petra, near Maan, may go back to the Thamud, though its architecture has many features connecting it with Egyptian and Graeco-Roman culture overlaying what is called by European writers Nabataean Culture.

Who were the Nabataeans?

They were an old Arab tribe which played a considerable part in history after they came into conflict with Antigonus I in 312 B.C. Their capital was Petra, but they extended their territory right up to the Euphrates. In 85 B.C. they were lords of Damascus under their king Haritha (Aretas of Roman history). For some time they were allies of the Roman Empire and held the Red Sea

littoral. The Emperor Trajan reduced them and annexed their territory in A.D. 105.

The Nabataeans succeeded the Thamud of Arabian tradition. Ile lbamijd are mentioned by name in an inscription of the Assyrian King Sargon, dated 715 B.C., as a people of Eastern and Central Arabia (Encyclopedia of Islam). See also Appendix VII to Surah 26.

With the advance of material civilisation, the Thamud people became godless and arrogant, and were destroyed by an earthquake. Their prophet and warner was Salih, and the crisis in their history is connected with the story of a wonderful she-camel:'

see next note.

... قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ ...

he said: "O my people!

...اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَـهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

worship Allah; ye have no other god but Him.

...قَدْ جَاءتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

Now hath come unto you a clear (sign) from your Lord!

...هَـذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةً فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللّهِ...

This she-camel of Allah is a sign unto you: so leave her to graze in Allah's earth,

...وَلاَ تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوَءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٧٣)

and let her come to no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment.

C1044. The story of this wonderful she-camel, that was a sign to the Thamud, is variously told in, tradition. We need not follow the various versions in the traditional story. What we are told in the Quran is: that

- she was a Sign or Symbol, which the prophet Salih, used for a warning to the haughty oppressors of the poor:

- there was scarcity of water, and the arrogant or privileged classes tried to prevent the access of the poor or their cattle to the springs, while Salih intervened on their behalf (26:155, 44:28);

- like water, pasture was considered a free gift of nature, in this spacious earth of Allah (7:73), but the arrogant ones tried to monopolise the pasture also;

- this particular she-camel was made a test case (54:27) to see if the arrogant ones would come to reason;

- the arrogant ones, instead of yielding to the reasonable rights of the people, ham-strung the poor she-camel and slew her, probably secretly (91:14, 54:29):

the cup of their iniquities was full, and the Thamud people were destroyed by a dreadful earthquake, which threw them prone on the ground and buried them with their houses and their fine buildings.

وَاذْكُرُواْ إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاء مِن بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ...

74. "And remember how He made you inheritors after the ad people and gave you habitations in the land:

... تَتَّخِذُونَ مِن سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا...

ye build for yourselves palaces and castles in (open) plains, and carve out homes in the mountains;

...فَاذْكُرُواْ آلاء اللّهِ وَلاَ تَعْثَوْاْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٧٤)

so bring to remembrance the benefits (ye have received) from Allah, and refrain from evil and mischief on the earth."

قَالَ الْمَلأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُواْ مِن قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُواْ لِمَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ...

75. The leaders of the arrogant party among his people said to those who were reckoned powerless -- those among them who believe:

C1045. As usually happens in such cases, the Believers were the lowly and the humble, and the oppressors were the arrogant, who in selfishly keeping back nature's gifts

(which are Allah's gifts) from the people, were deaf to the dictates of justice and kindness.

Salih took the side of the unprivileged, and was therefore himself attacked.

...أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَالِحًا مُّرْسَلٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ...

"Know ye indeed that Salih is a messenger from his Lord?"

...قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ (٧٥)

They said: "We do indeed believe in the revelation which hath been sent through him."

C1046. Notice the relation between the question and the answer.

The godless chiefs wanted to discredit Salih, and put a personal question, as much as to say, "Is he not a liar?"

The Believers took back the issue to the higher plane, as much as to say. "We know he is a man of Allah, but look at the justice for which he is making a stand: to resist it is to resist Allah".

The answer of the godless was to reject Allah in words, and in action to commit a further act of cruelty and injustice in ham-stringing and killing the she-camel, at the same time hurling defiance at Salih and his God.

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا بِالَّذِي آمَنتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٧٦)

76. The arrogant party said: "For our part, we reject what ye believe in."

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ...

77. Then they ham-strung the she-camel, and insolently defied the order of their Lord, saying: "O Salih!

...ائْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٧٧)

bring about thy threats, if thou art a messenger (of Allah)!"

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٧٨)

78. So the earthquake took them unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes in the morning!

C1047. The retribution was not long delayed. A terrible earthquake came and buried the people and destroyed their boasted civilisation.

The calamity must have been fairly extensive in area and intense in the terror it inspired, for it is described (54:31) as a "single mighty blast" (saihatan wahidatan), the sort of terror-inspiring noise which accompanies all big earthquakes.

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ ...

79. So Salih left them, saying:

C1048. Salih was saved by Allah's mercy as a just and righteous man.

His speech here may be either a parting warning, or it may be a soliloquy lamenting the destruction of his people for their sin and folly.

... يَا قَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ ...

"O my people! I did indeed convey to you the message for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel,

...وَلَكِن لاَّ تُحِبُّونَ النَّاصِحِينَ (٧٩)

but ye love not good counsellors!"

وَلُوطًا ...

80. We also (sent) Lut:

C1049. Lut is the Lot of the English Bible. His story is biblical, but freed from some shameful features which are a blot on the biblical narrative, (e.g., see Gen. 19:30-36).

He was a nephew of Abraham, and was sent as a Prophet and warner to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, cities utterly destroyed for their unspeakable sins. They cannot be exactly located, but it may be supposed that they were somewhere in the plain cast of the Dead Sea.

The story of their destruction is told in the 19th chapter of Genesis. Two angels in the shape of handsome young men came to Lot in the evening and became his guests by night. The inhabitants of Sodom in their lust for unnatural crime invaded Lut's house but were repulsed. In the morning, the angels warned Lut to escape with his family. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." (Gen. 19:24-26).

Note that Lut's people are the people to whom he is sent on a mission. He was not one of their own brethren, as was Salih or Shu'aib. But he looked upon his people as his brethren (50:13), as a man of God always does.

... إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُم بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن

الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٠)

he said to his people:

"Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you?

إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّن دُونِ النِّسَاء...

81. "For ye practice your lusts on men in preference to women:

...بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ (٨١)

ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds."

وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلاَّ أَن قَالُواْ أَخْرِجُوهُم مِّن قَرْيَتِكُمْ...

82. And his people gave no answer but this: they said,

"Drive them out of your city:

...إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ (٨٢)

these are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!"

C1050. An instance of the withering sarcasm that hardened sinners use against the righteous. They wound with words, and follow up the insult with deeds of injustice, thinking that they would bring the righteous into disgrace. But Allah looks after His own, and in the end, the wicked themselves are overthrown when the cup of their iniquity is full.

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلاَّ امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ (٨٣)

83. But We saved him and his family, except his wife:

she was of those who lagged behind.

C1051. In the biblical narrative she looks back, a physical act (see n. 1049): here she is a type of those who lag behind, i.e., whose mental and moral attitude, in spite of their association with the righteous, is to hark back to the glitter of wickedness and sin.

The righteous should have one sole objective, the Way of Allah. they should not took behind, nor yet to the right or the left.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّطَرًا...

84. And We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone):

C1052. The shower is expressly stated in 11:82 to have been of stones.

In 15:73-74, we are told that there was a terrible blast or noise (saihat) in addition to the shower of stones,

Taking these passages into consideration along with Gen. 19:24. (see n. 1049 above), I think it is legitimate to translate: "a shower of brimstone."

...فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٨٤)

then see what was the end of those who indulged in sin and crime!

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ ...

85. To the Madyan people

C1053. "Madyan" may be identified with "Midian".

Midian and the Midianites are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, though the particular incident here mentioned belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition.

The Midianites were of Arab race, though, as neighbors of the Canaanites, they probably intermixed with them. They were a wandering tribe: it was Midianite merchants to whom Joseph was sold into slavery, and who took him to Egypt.

Their principal territory in the time of Moses was in the northeast of the Sinai Peninsula, and cast of the Amalekites. Under Moses the Israelites waged a war of extermination against them: they slew the kings of Midian, slaughtered all the males, burnt their cities and castles, and captured their cattle (Num. 31:7-11).

This sounds like total extermination. Yet a few generations afterwards, they were so powerful that the Israelites for their sins were delivered into the captivity of the Midianites for seven years: both the Midianites and their camels were without number: and the Israelites hid from them in "dens..... caves, and strongholds" (Judges 7:1-6).

Gideon destroyed them again, (Judges 7:1-25), say about two centuries after Moses. As the decisive battle was near the hill of Moreh, not far south of Mount Tabor, we may localize the Midianites on this occasion in the northern parts of the Jordan valley, at least 200 miles north of the Sinai Peninsula.

This and the previous destruction under Moses were local, and mention no town of Midian. In later times there was a town of Madyan on the cast side of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. It is mentioned in Josephus, Eusebius, and

Ptolemy: (Encyclopedia of Islam). Then it disappears from geography.

In Muslim times it was a revived town with quite a different kind of population, but it never flourished. The Midianites disappeared from history.

... أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ...

We sent Shu'aib, one of their own brethren:

C1054. Shu'ayb belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition, to which he is unknown.

His identification with Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, has no warrant, and I reject it. There is no similarity either in names or incidents, and there are chronological difficulties (see n. 1064 below).

If, as the Commentators tell us, Shu'ayb was in the fourth generation from Abraham, being a great-grandson of Madyan (a son of Abraham), he would be only about a century from the time of Abraham, whereas the Hebrew Bible would give us a period of four to six centuries between Abraham and Moses. The mere fact that Jathro was a Midianite and that another name, Hobab, is mentioned for a father-in-law of Moses in Num 10:29, is slender ground for identification.

As the Midianites were mainly a nomad tribe, we need not be surprised that their destruction in one or two settlements did not affect their life in wandering sections of the tribe in other geographical regions. Shu'ayb's mission was apparently in one of the settled towns of the Midianites, which was completely destroyed by an earthquake (7:91).

If this happened in the century after Abraham, there is no difficulty in supposing that they were again a numerous tribe, three or five centuries later, in the time of Moses (see last note). As they were a mixed wandering tribe, both their resilience and their eventual absorption can be easily understood. But the destruction of the settlement or settlements (if the Wood or Aykah was a separate settlement, see n. 2000 to 15:78) to

which Shu'ayb was sent to preach was complete, and no traces of it now remain.

The name of the highest mountain of Yemen, Nabi Shu'ayb (11,000 ft.) has probably no connection with the geographical territory of the nomad Midianites, unless we suppose that their wanderings extended so far south from the territories mentioned in the last note.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَـهٍ غَيْرُهُ ...

he said:

"O my people! worship Allah; Ye have no other god but Him.

قَدْ جَاءتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

Now hath come unto you a clear (sign) from your Lord!

...فَأَوْفُواْ الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلاَ تَبْخَسُواْ النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءهُمْ...

Give just measure and weight,

nor withhold from the people the things that are their due;

...وَلاَ تُفْسِدُواْ فِي الأرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلاَحِهَا...

and do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order:

...ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٨٥)

that will be best for you, if ye have faith.

وَلاَ تَقْعُدُواْ بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

86. "And squat not on every road, breathing threats, hindering from the path of Allah those who believe in Him,

...مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا...

and seeking in it something crooked;

...وَاذْكُرُواْ إِذْ كُنتُمْ قَلِيلاً فَكَثَّرَكُمْ...

but remember how ye were little, and He gave you increase.

...وَانظُرُواْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٨٦)

And hold in your mind's eye what was the end of those who did mischief.

C1055. The Midianites were in the path of a commercial highway of Asia, viz., that between two such opulent and highly organized nations as Egypt and the Mesopotamian group comprising Assyria and Babylonia. Their besetting sins are thus characterized here:

- giving short measure or weight, whereas the strictest commercial probity is necessary for success,
- a more general form of such fraud, depriving people of rightful dues,
- producing mischief and disorder, whereas peace and order had been established (again in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense);
- not content with upsetting settled life, taking to highway robbery, literally as well as
- metaphorically, in two ways, viz., cutting off people from access to the worship of Allah, and abusing religion and piety for crooked purposes, i.e., exploiting religion itself for their crooked ends, as when a man builds houses of prayer out of unlawful gains or ostentatiously gives charity out of money which he has obtained by force or fraud, etc.

After setting out this catalogue of besetting sins Shu'ayb makes two appeals to the past:

- You began as an insignificant tribe, and by Allah's favour you increased and multiplied in numbers and resources: do you not then owe a duty to Allah to fulfil His Law?
- What was the result in the case of those who fell into sin?

  Will you not take warning by their example?

So Shu'ayb began his argument with faith in Allah as the source of all virtue, and ended it with destruction as the result of all sin.

In the next verse he pleads with them to end their controversies and come to Allah.

وَإِن كَانَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنكُمْ آمَنُواْ بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ...

87. "And if there is a party among you who believes in the message with which I have been sent,

...وَطَآئِفَةٌ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُواْ ...

and a party which does not believe,

C1056. Madyan is torn by internal conflict. Shu'ayb comes as a peace-maker, not in virtue of his own wisdom, but by appeal to the truth, righteousness and justice of God.

As we see later, the real motives of his opponents were selfishness, arrogance, violence, lawlessness, and injustice. Bu he appeals to their better nature, and is prepared to argue on the basis that the party which wants to suppress those who believe in God's Message and in righteousness, has some sincere mental difficulty in accepting Shu'ayb's mission.

"If," he says to them, "that is the case, do you think it justifies you intolerance, your violence, or your persecution? On the contrary, events will prove by themselves who is right and who is wrong."

To the small band who believe in his mission and follow his teaching, he would preach patience and perseverance. His argument to them would be:

"You have faith; surely your faith is strong enough to sustain you in the hope that Allah's truth will triumph in the end; there is no cause for despair or dejection."

How exactly these past experiences fit the times of our holy guide Muhammad! And it is for that analogy and that lesson that the stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb are related to us, all different, and yet all pointing to the great lessons in Muhammad's life.

... فَاصْبِرُواْ حَتَّى يَحْكُمَ اللّهُ بَيْنَنَا...

hold yourselves in patience until Allah doth decide between us:

...وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٨٧)

for He is the best to decide."

C1057. See the argument in the last note.

Allah's decision may come partly in this very life, either for the same generation or for succeeding generations, by the logic of external events. But in any case it is bound to come spiritually on a higher plane eventually, when the righteous will be comforted and the sinners will be convinced of sin from their own inner conviction.

قَالَ الْمَلأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُواْ مِن قَوْمِهِ...

88. The leaders, the arrogant party among his people, said:

C1058. The gentle, all-persuasive arguments of Shu'ayb fell on hard hearts. Their only reply was: "Turn him out! him and his people."

When courtesy and a plea for toleration are pitted against bigotry, what room is there for logic? But bigotry and unrighteousness have their own crooked ways of pretending to be tolerant. "O yes!" they said, "we are very tolerant and long-suffering! But we are for our country and religion. Come back to the ways of our fathers, and we shall graciously forgive you!"

"Ways of their fathers!" - they meant injustice and oppression, high-handedness to the poor and the weak, fraud under cover of religion, and so on! Perhaps the righteous were the poor and the weak.

Were they likely to love such ways?

Perhaps there was implied a bribe as well as a threat. "If you come back and wink at our iniquities, you shall have scraps of prosperity thrown at you. If not, out you go in disgrace!"

لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يَا شُعَيْبُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَعَكَ مِن قَرْيَتِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا...

"O Shu'aib! we shall certainly drive thee out of our city, (thee) and those who believe with thee:

or else ye (thou and they) shall have to return to our ways and religion."

...قَالَ أَوَلَوْ كُنَّا كَارِهِينَ (٨٨)

He said: "What! even though we do detest (them)?

قَدِ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِي مِلَّتِكُم بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّانَا اللّهُ مِنْهَا...

89. "We should indeed invent a lie against Allah, if we returned to your ways after Allah hath rescued us therefrom:

C1059. The answer of the righteous is threefold.

1. "Coming back is all very well. But do you mean that we should practice the vices we detest?"
2. "You want us to lie against our conscience and our Lord, after we have seen the evil of your ways."
3. "Neither bribes nor threats, nor spacious appeals to patriotism or ancestral religion can move us: the matter rests with Allah, Whose will and pleasure we obey, and on Whom alone we rely. His knowledge will search out all your specious pretences."

...وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَن نَّعُودَ فِيهَا إِلاَّ أَن يَشَاء اللّهُ رَبُّنَا...

nor could we by any manner of means return thereto unless it be as in the Will and plan of Allah, our Lord.

C1060. This, of course, does not mean that any one can ever return to evil ways with Allah's consent. Shu'ayb has already emphatically repudiated the idea of returning "to your ways after Allah hath rescued us therefrom."

But even if their ways had been good, the human will, he goes on to say, has no data to rely upon, and he and his followers would only be guided by Allah's Will and Plan.

...وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا...

Our Lord can reach out to the utmost recesses of things by His knowledge.

...عَلَى اللّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا...

In Allah is our trust.

...رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ ...

Our Lord! decide thou between us and our people in truth,

C1061. Having answered the insincere quibblers among the godless, the righteous turn to Allah in earnest prayer.

The endless controversies in this world about abstract or speculative things never end even where both sides are sincere in their beliefs. The decision must be taken to Allah, Who sits on the throne of Truth, and Whose decisions will, therefore, be free from the errors and imperfections of all human judgment. The sincere have nothing to fear in the appeal to Him, as their motives are pure.

... وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ (٨٩)

for thou art the best to decide."

وَقَالَ الْمَلأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن قَوْمِهِ لَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْباً إِنَّكُمْ إِذاً لَّخَاسِرُونَ (٩٠)

90. The leaders, the unbelievers among his people, said,
"If ye follow Shu'ayb, be sure then ye are ruined!"

C1062. The answer of the Unbelievers is characteristic. As all their bribes and subtleties have failed, they resort to threats, which are worse than the argument of the stick. "All right," they say, "there is nothing but ruin before you!"

That means that the Believers will be persecuted, held up to obloquy, ostracized, and prevented from access to all means of honourable livelihood; their families and dependants will be insulted, reviled, and tortured, if they could but be got into the enemy's power: their homes destroyed, and their names held up to ridicule and contempt even when they are gone.

But, as verse 92 says, their wicked designs recoiled on themselves; it was the wicked who were ruined and blotted out.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُواْ فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٩١)

91. But the earthquake took them unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning!

C1063. The fate of the Madyan people is described in the same terms as that of the Thamud in verse 78

above. An earthquake seized them by night, and they were buried in their own homes, no longer to vex Allah's earth.

But a supplementary detail is mentioned in 26:189, "the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom," which may be understood to mean a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. Thus a day of terror drove them into their homes, and the earthquake finished them.

The lament of Shu'ayb in verse 93 is almost the same as that of Salih in verse 79, with two differences:

- Shu'ayb's messages attacked the many sins of his people (see n. 1055) and are, therefore, expressed in the plural, while Salih's fight was chiefly against selfish arrogance, and his message is expressed in the singular;

- the Thamud were the more cultured people of the two, and perished in their own pride; as Salih said, "ye love not good counselors";

  the Midianites were a rougher people, and their minds were less receptive of argument or faith; as Shu'ayb said, they were a people who "refused to believe."

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ شُعَيْبًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْاْ فِيهَا...

92. The men who rejected Shu'aib became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished:

...الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ شُعَيْبًا كَانُواْ هُمُ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٩٢)

the men who rejected Shu'aib -- it was they who were ruined!

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالاَتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ...

93. So Shu'aib left them, saying:

"O my people! I did indeed convey to you the messages for which I was sent by my Lord:

I gave you good counsel,

فَكَيْفَ آسَى عَلَى قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ (٩٣)...

but how shall I lament over a people who refuse to believe!

C1064. Can we get any idea of the chronological place of the destruction of the Midianites?

In n. 1053 we have discussed the geographical aspects. The following considerations will help us in getting some idea of their period.

1. The stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb seem to be in chronological order. Therefore Shu'ayb came after Abraham, whose nephew Lut was.
2. If Shu'aib was in the fourth generation from Abraham, (see n. 1590 to 11:89), it would be impossible for him to have been a contemporary of Moses, who came many centuries later.

   This difficulty is recognised by Ibn Kathir and other classical commentators.
3. The identification of Shu'ayb with Jethro the father-in-law of Moses is without warrant; see n. 1054.
4. Shu'ayb must have been before Moses; see 7:103.
5. The Midianites who were destroyed by Moses and by Gideon after him (n. 1053) were local remnants, as we may speak of the Jews at the present day; but their existence as a nation in their original home-lands seems to have ended before Moses: "they became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished" (7:92).
6. Josephus, Eusebius, and Ptolemy mention a town of Madyan, but it was not of any importance (n. 1053).
7. After the first centuries of the Christian era, Madyan as a town appears as an unimportant place resting on its past.

Section 12

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلاَّ أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاء وَالضَّرَّاء لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضَّرَّعُونَ (٩٤)

94. Whenever We sent a prophet to a town, We took up its people in suffering and adversity, in order that they might learn humility.

C1065. Man was originally created pure. The need of a prophet arises when there is some corruption and iniquity, which he is sent to combat.

His coming means much trial and suffering, especially to those who join him in his protest against wrong. Even so peaceful a prophet as Jesus said; "I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).

But it is all in Allah's Plan, for we must learn humility if we would be worthy of Him.

ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ...

95. Then We changed their suffering into prosperity,

...حَتَّى عَفَواْ وَّقَالُواْ قَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءنَا الضَّرَّاء وَالسَّرَّاء...

until they grew and multiplied, and began to say: "Our fathers (too) were touched by suffering and affluence."...

C1066. Allah gives enough rope to the sinful. They grow and multiply, and become scornful.

Neither suffering nor affluence teaches them the lessons which they are meant to learn, viz., patience and humility, gratitude and kindness to others.

They take adversity and prosperity alike as a matter of chance. "O yes!" they say, "such things have happened in all ages! Our fathers had such experience before us, and our sons will have them after us. Thus goes on the world for all time!"

But does it?

What about the decree of Allah?

They are found napping when Nemesis overtakes them in the midst of their impious tomfoolery!

...فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ (٩٥)

Behold! We called them to account of a sudden, while they realized not (their peril).

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُواْ وَاتَّقَواْ لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالأَرْضِ...

96. If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed have opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth;

...وَلَـكِن كَذَّبُواْ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْسِبُونَ (٩٦)

but they rejected (the truth), and We brought them to book for their misdeeds.

أَفَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَى أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتاً وَهُمْ نَآئِمُونَ (٩٧)

97. Did the people of the towns feel secure against the coming of our wrath by night while they were asleep?

C1067. This and the two following verses should be read together. They furnish a commentary on the story of the five prophets that has already been related.

Allah's wrath may come by night or by day, whether people are arrogantly defying Allah's laws or are sunk in lethargy or vain dreams of unreality.

Who can escape Allah's decree, and who can feel themselves outside it except those who are seeking their own ruin?

أَوَ أَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَى أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ (٩٨)

98. Or else did they feel secure against its coming in broad daylight while they played about (carefree)?

أَفَأَمِنُواْ مَكْرَ اللّهِ فَلاَ يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللّهِ إِلاَّ الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٩٩)

99. Did they then fell secure against the plan of Allah?

But no one can feel secure from the plan of Allah, except those (doomed) to ruin!

C1068. This closes that chapter of the narrative which deals with Prophets who were rejected by their own people, but who stood firm on Allah's message and were able to rescue a remnant who believed.

In each case there were special circumstances and special besetting sins, which have been explained in the notes. The nations which as a body could not be won over to Allah's Law perished.

So far we have been dealing with the corruptions and iniquities within each nation. In the story of Moses we have first a struggle against the bondage of Egypt, one of the foremost powers then in the world, the rescue of the Israelites and their wanderings, and their proving themselves unworthy and being left to wander in a new sense when they rejected the new Prophet (Muhammad) who came to renew Allah's Message.

C.86 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(7:100-157)

While the story of the prophets who preached
In vain to their people prefigures
The struggles in the early careers
Of all Prophets, the story of Mosses-
His struggles, with an alien and arrogant
People, his final deliverance
Of his people from foreign domination.
And his leading them within sight
Of the Promised Land, in spite
Of the forces that resisted-prefigures
The early struggles and eventual triumph
Of Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Allah.

Section 13

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الأَرْضَ مِن بَعْدِ أَهْلِهَا...

100. To those who inherit the earth in succession to its (previous) possessors,

أَن لَّوْ نَشَاء أَصَبْنَاهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ...

is it not a guiding (lesson) that, if We so willed, We could punish them (too) for their sins,

...وَنَطْبَعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يَسْمَعُونَ (١٠٠)

and seal up their hearts so that they could not hear?

C1069. The stories which have been related should give a warning to present and future generations which have inherited the land, the power, or the experience of the past.

They should know that if they fall into the same sins they will meet with the same fate: when through their contumacy their hearts are hardened, they do not listen to the advice that falls on their ears.

تِلْكَ الْقُرَى نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنبَآئِهَا...

101. Such were the towns whose story We (thus) relate unto thee:

... وَلَقَدْ جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُواْ لِيُؤْمِنُواْ بِمَا كَذَّبُواْ مِن قَبْلُ...

there came indeed to them their Messengers with clear (signs): but they would not believe what they had rejected before.

C1070. Those who have heard the Message and rejected it find it more difficult afterwards to retrace their steps. Evil has blocked the channels of Allah's grace to them. It begins with their breaking their Covenant with Allah; with each step afterwards they fall deeper and deeper into the mire.

...كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّهُ عَلَىَ قُلُوبِ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٠١)

Thus doth Allah seal up the heart of those who reject faith.

وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِأَكْثَرِهِم مِّنْ عَهْدٍ...

102. Most of them We found not men (true) to their covenant:

...وَإِن وَجَدْنَا أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَاسِقِينَ (١٠٢)

but most of them We found rebellious and disobedient.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِم مُّوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا...

103. Then after them We sent Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs,

but they wrongfully rejected them:

...فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (١٠٣)

so see what was the end of those who made mischief.

وَقَالَ مُوسَى ...

104. Moses said:

C1071. The story of Moses is told in many places in the Holy Quran, with a special lesson in each context.

In 2:49-71, the story is an appeal to the Jews from their own scripture and traditions, to show their true place in the religious history of mankind, and how they forfeited it. Here we have an instructive parallelism in that story to the story of Muhammad's mission, -how both these men of Allah had to fight against;

- a foreign foe, arrogant, unjust, faithless, and superstitious, and
- against the same class of internal foe among their own people.

Both of them won through.

- In the case of Moses, the foreign foe was Pharaoh and his Egyptians, who boasted of their earlier and superior civilisation;
- in the case of the Prophet Muhammad the foreign foes were the Jews themselves and the Christians of his day.

Moses led his people nearly to the land of promise in spite of rebellions among his own people;

Muhammad succeeded completely in overcoming the resistance of his own people by his own virtues and firmness of character, and by the guidance of Allah. What was a hope when these Makkan verses were revealed became an accomplishment before the end of his life and mission on earth.

... يَا فِرْعَوْنُ إِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٤)

"O Pharaoh!

I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.

C1072. "Pharaoh" (Arabic, Fir'aun) is a dynastic title, not the name of any particular king in Egypt.

It has been traced to the ancient Hieroglyphic words, Per-da, which mean "Great House." The nun is an "infirm" letter added in the process of Arabisation.

Who was the Pharaoh in the story of Moses?

If the Inscriptions had helped us, we could have answered with some confidence, but unfortunately the Inscriptions fail us.

It is probable that it was an early Pharaoh of the XVIIIth Dynasty, say Thothmes 1, about 1540 B.C.

See Appendix IV. on Egyptian Chronology and Israel, printed at the end of this Surah.

حَقِيقٌ عَلَى أَن لاَّ أَقُولَ عَلَى اللّهِ إِلاَّ الْحَقَّ...

105. "One for whom it is right to say nothing but truth about Allah.

...قَدْ جِئْتُكُم بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (١٠٥)

Now have I come unto you (people), from your Lord with a clear (sign): so let the children of Israel depart along with me."

C1073. Notice that Moses, in addressing Pharaoh and the Egyptians, claims his mission to be not from his God, or his people's God but from "your Lord," from "the Lord of the Worlds." And his mission is not to his people only: "I come unto you (Egyptian people) from your Lord."

"The spirit of our version is entirely different from the spirit of the same story as told in the Old Testament (Exod. chapters 1-15). In Exod. 3:18, the mission of Moses is expressed to be as from "the Lord God of the Hebrews."

The essence of the whole Islamic story is this:

Joseph's sufferings and good fortune were not merely a story in a romance. Joseph was a prophet; his sufferings and his subsequent rise to power and position in Egypt were to be a lesson;

a. to his wicked brothers who sold him into slavery,

b. to his people who were stricken with famine and found a welcome in Egypt, and

c. to the Egyptians, who were arrogant over their high material civilisation, but had yet to be taught the pure faith of Abraham.

Israel prospered in Egypt, and stayed there perhaps two to four centuries. (Renan allows only one century).

Times changed, and the racial bigotry of the Egyptians showed its head again, and Israel was oppressed. Moses was raised up with a threefold mission again;

a. to learn all the learning of the Egyptians and preach Allah's Truth to them as one who had been brought up among themselves,

b. to unite and reclaim his own people, and

c. to rescue them and lead them to a new world, which was to open out their spiritual horizon and lead them to the Psalms of David and the glories of Solomon.

قَالَ إِن كُنتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (١٠٦)

106. (Pharaoh) said: "If indeed thou hast come with a sign, show it forth, if thou tellest the truth."

C1074. The ensuing dialogue shows the psychology on the two sides.

Pharaoh is sitting in his court, with his ministers and chiefs around him. In their arrogance they are only

amused at the effrontery and apparent revolt of the Israelite leaders, and they rely upon their own superior worldly power, aided by the magic which was a part of the Egyptian religion.

Confronting them stand two men, Moses with his mission from Allah, and his brother Aaron who was his lieutenant. They are confident, not in their own powers, but in the mission they had received.

The first thing they have to do is to act on the subjective mind of the Egyptians, and by methods which by Allah's miracle show that Egyptian magic was nothing before the true power of Allah.

فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٠٧)

107. Then (Moses) threw his rod, and behold! it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)!

C1075. The serpent played a large part in Egyptian mythology.

The great sun-god Ra won a great victory over the serpent Apophis, typifying the victory of light over darkness. Many of their gods and goddesses took the forms of snakes to impress their foes with terror.

Moses' rod as a type of a serpent at once appealed to the Egyptian mentality. The contempt which the Egyptians had entertained in their minds before was converted into terror.

Here was some one who could control the reptile which their great god Ra himself had such difficulty in overcoming!

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاء لِلنَّاظِرِينَ (١٠٨)

108. And he drew out his hand and behold! it was white to all beholders!

C1076. But the second Sign displayed by Moses was even more puzzling to the Egyptians. Moses drew out his hand from the folds of the garments on his breast, and it was white and shining as with divine light!

This was to counter any suggestions of evil, which the serpent might have created. This was no work of evil, - Of black magic, or a trick or illusion. His hand was transfigured -with a light which no Egyptian sorcerers could produce. In Islamic literature the "white hand" of Moses has passed into a proverb, for a symbol of divine glory dazzling to the beholders.

Section 14

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَـذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٠٩)

109. Said the Chiefs of the people of Pharaoh:

"This is indeed a sorcerer well-versed.

يُرِيدُ أَن يُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ (١١٠)

110. "His plan is to get you out of your land then what is it ye counsel?"

C1077. The two Signs had the desired effect on the Egyptians. They were impressed, but they judged them by their own standards. They thought to themselves, "These are ordinary sorcerers: let us search out our best sorcerers and show them that they have superior power."

But like all worldly people, they began to fear for their own power and possessions. It was far from Moses' intention to drive out the Egyptians from their own land. He merely wanted to end the Egyptian oppression. But the Egyptians had a guilty conscience, and they judged other people's motives by their own. They discussed the matter in Council on quite wrong premises.

قَالُواْ أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِي الْمَدَآئِنِ حَاشِرِينَ (١١١)

111. They said:

"Keep him and his brother in suspense (for a while); and send to the cities men to collect

يَأْتُوكَ بِكُلِّ سَاحِرٍ عَلِيمٍ (١١٢)

112. and bring up to thee all (our) sorcerers well-versed."

C1078. The advice of the Council to Pharaoh shows a misreading of the situation. They were in a panic about what the magic of this evidently powerful sorcerer could do against them. So they advised the Pharaoh to summon their most powerful sorcerers from all over the country, and in the meantime to hold Moses and Aaron in suspense, -neither to yield to them nor definitely to oppose them.

The Prophets of Allah could well afford to wait. Time is always in favour of Truth. (R).

وَجَاء السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُواْ إِنَّ لَنَا لأَجْرًا إِن كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ (١١٣)

113. So there came the sorcerers to Pharaoh: they said, "Of course we shall have a (suitable) reward if we win!"

C1079. The most noted sorcerers of Pharaoh came. Their art was built up on trickery and imposture, and the first thing they could think of was to make a selfish bargain for themselves.

The Pharaoh and his Council would in their present state of panic agree to anything. And so they did.

Pharaoh not only promised them any rewards they desired if they foiled the strange power of these men, but he also promised them the highest dignities round his own person.

And so the contest begins, with due observance of the amenities observed by combatants before they come to close grips.

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (١١٤)

114. He said: "Yea, (and more), for ye shall in that case be (raised to posts) nearest (to my person)."

قَالُواْ يَا مُوسَى إِمَّا أَن تُلْقِيَ وَإِمَّا أَن نَّكُونَ نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِينَ (١١٥)

115. They said:

"O Moses! wilt thou throw (first), or shall we have the (first) throw?"

قَالَ أَلْقُوْاْ...

116. Said Moses: "Throw ye (first)."

...فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْاْ سَحَرُواْ أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوهُمْ وَجَاءوا بِسِحْرٍ

عَظِيمٍ (١١٦)

So when they threw,

they bewitched the eyes of the people, and struck terror into them: for they showed a great (feat of) magic.

C1080. Moses and his brother Aaron were pitted against the most skilful magic-men of Egypt, but they were calm and confident and let the magic-men have their innings first. As is usual in this world, the magicians trickery made a great impression on the people, but when Moses threw his rod, the illusion was broken, and the falsehood was all shown up.

In the Old Testament story (Exod. 7:10-12) it was Aaron that threw the rod, and he threw it before the magicians. Aaron's rod became a serpent. Then the magicians threw their rods, and they became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

The story given to us is more dramatic and less literal.

We are told in general terms that Moses first allowed the magic-men to play their tricks. It was a simple shepherd's crook with which he used to feed his flocks. With Allah's grace behind him, he was able to expose all false trickery and establish the Truth.

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ...

117. We put it into Moses' mind by inspiration: "Throw (now) thy rod":

...فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ (١١٧)

and behold! it swallows up straightway all the falsehoods which they fake!

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (١١٨)

118. Thus truth was confirmed, and all that they did was made of no effect.

فَغُلِبُوا هُنَالِكَ وَانقَلَبُوا صَاغِرِينَ (١١٩)

119. So the (great ones) were vanquished there and then, and were made to look small.

C1081. The proud ones of the Court-Pharaoh and his chiefs were hard-hearted, and the exposure of the imposture only made them wreak their rage on those whom they could reach.

On the other hand the effect on the humbler ones -those who had been made the dupes and instruments of the imposture- was quite different. Their conscience was awakened. They fell down to the ground in adoration of the Lord of the Worlds, and confessed their faith.

وَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ (١٢٠)

120. But the sorcerers fell down prostrate in adoration.

قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٢١)

121. Saying:

"We believe in the Lord of the worlds.

رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (١٢٢)

122. "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ آمَنتُم بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ...

123. Said Pharaoh:

"Believe ye in him before I give you permission?

...إِنَّ هَـذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَّكَرْتُمُوهُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لِتُخْرِجُوا مِنْهَا أَهْلَهَا...

Surely this is a trick which ye have planned in the city to drive out its people:

...فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٢٣)

but soon shall ye know (the consequences).

C1082. Pharaoh and his Court were doubly angry:

- first because they were made to look small when confronted by the power of Allah, and

- secondly, because their dupes and instruments were snatched away from them.

These men, the sorcerers, at once recognised the Sings of Allah, and in their case the mission of Moses, and Aaron was fulfilled. They turned back on their past life of false worship, and oppression of the weak, and confessed the One true God.

As usually happens, hardened sinners resent all the more the saving of any of their companions from sin and error. Judging other people's motives by their own, they accuse them of duplicity, and if they have the power, they take cruel revenge. Here the Pharaoh threatens the repentant sinners with the extreme punishment for treason and apostasy (cutting off of hands and feet, combined with an ignominious death on the cross, as in the case of the worst malefactors).

But they remained firm, and prayed to Allah for patience and constancy. Probably their influence spread quietly in the commonalty. Ultimately it appeared on the throne itself, in the person of Amenophis IV about five or six generations afterwards.

See Appendix V, on Egyptian Religion, printed at the end of this Surah.

لأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلاَفٍ ثُمَّ لأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٢٤)

124. "Be sure I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will cause you all to die on the cross."

قَالُواْ إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا مُنقَلِبُونَ (١٢٥)

125. They said: "For us, we are but sent back unto our Lord.

وَمَا تَنقِمُ مِنَّا إِلاَّ أَنْ آمَنَّا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا جَاءتْنَا...

126. "But thou dost wreak thy vengeance on us simply because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they reached us!

...رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ (١٢٦)

Our Lord! pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto thee as Muslims (who bow to thy will)"!

C1083. These Egyptians, by their patience and constancy, show that their repentance was true. Thus in their case the mission of Moses was fulfilled directly, and their number must have amounted to a considerable figure.

They were martyrs to their faith, and their martyrdom affected their nation in two ways.

- In the first place, as they were the pick of those who practised magic in Egypt, their conversion and disappearance dealt a staggering blow to the whole system.
- Secondly, the indirect effect of their martyrdom on the commonalty of Egypt must have been far greater than can be measured by numbers.

The banner of Allah was planted, and the silent spiritual fight must have gone on ever since, though history, in recording outward events, is silent on the slow and gradual processes of transformation undergone by Egyptian religion.

From a chaotic pantheon of animals and animal gods, the worship of the sun and the heavenly bodies, and the worship of the Pharaoh as the embodiment of power, they gradually came to realise the oneness and mercy of the true God. After many glimpses of Monotheism on Egyptian soil itself, the Gospel of Jesus reached them, and eventually Islam.

Section 15

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِ فِرْعَونَ...

127. Said the chiefs of Pharaoh's people:

...أَتَذَرُ مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَآلِهَتَكَ...

"Wilt thou leave Moses and his people, to spread mischief in the land, and to abandon thee and thy gods?"

...قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَاءهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِـي نِسَاءهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ (١٢٧)

He said:

"Their male children will we slay; (only) their females will we save alive;

and we have over them (power) irresistible."

C1084. Pharaoh's order against the sorcerers was drastic enough. But his Council is not satisfied.

What about Moses and the Israelites?

They had a seeming victory, and will now be more mischievous than ever. They appeal to Pharaoh's vanity and his superstition and sense of power. "If you leave them alone." they say, "where will be your authority? You and your gods will be defied!"

Pharaoh has a ready answer. He was really inwardly cowed by the apparent power of Moses. He dared not openly act against him. But he had already, before the birth of Moses, passed a cunning order to destroy the whole people of Israel. Through the instrumentality of midwives (Exod. 1:15-16) all the male children were to be destroyed. and the females would then be for the Egyptians: the race of Israel would thus be at an end. This order was still in force, and would remain in force until the despised race was absorbed.

But Egyptian cunning and wickedness had no power against Allah's Plan for those who had faith.

See verse 129 below.

قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللّهِ وَاصْبِرُواْ...

128. Said Moses to his people:

"Pray for help from Allah, and (wait) in patience and constancy:

... إِنَّ الأَرْضَ لِلّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ...

for the earth is Allah's to give as a heritage to such of his servants as He pleaseth;

...وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (١٢٨)

and the end is (best) for the righteous.

C1085. Notice the contrast between the arrogant tone of Pharaoh and the humility and faith taught by Moses.

In the end the arrogance was humbled, and humility and faith were protected and advanced.

...قَالُوا أُوذِينَا مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَأْتِيَنَا وَمِن بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا

129. They said:

"We have had (nothing but) trouble, both before and after thou comest to us."

C1086. There is a slight note of querulous-ness in the people's answer. But Moses allays it by his own example and courage, and his vision of the future: which was amply fulfilled in time.

See verse 137 below.

...قَالَ عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ...

He said:

"It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you inheritors in the earth;

C1087. The Israelites, despised and enslaved, were to be rescued and made rulers in Palestine. David and Solomon were great kings and played a notable part in history.

But the greatness of Israel was conditional: they were to be judged by their deeds. When they fell from grace, other people were given honour and power. And so it came to be the turn of the Muslims, and so on. Allah gives His gifts to those who are righteous and obey His Law.

...فَيَنظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٢٩)

that so He may try you by your deeds."

Section 16

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا آلَ فِرْعَونَ بِالسِّنِينَ وَنَقْصٍ مِّن الثَّمَرَاتِ...

130. We punished the people of Pharaoh with years (of drought) and shortness of crops;

...لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (١٣٠)

that they might receive admonition.

فَإِذَا جَاءتْهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُواْ لَنَا هَـذِهِ...

131. But when good (times) came, they said, "This is due to us;"

...وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطَّيَّرُواْ بِمُوسَى وَمَن مَّعَهُ...

when gripped by calamity, they ascribed it to evil omens connected with Moses and those with him!

...أَلا إِنَّمَا طَائِرُهُمْ عِندَ اللّهُ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣١)

Behold! in truth the omens of evil are theirs in Allah's sight, but most of them do not understand!

C1088. Their superstition ascribed the punishment of their own wickedness to some evil omen. They thought Moses and his people brought them ill-luck. They did not look within themselves to see the root of evil, and the cause of their punishment!

So it happens in all ages. People blame the righteous for something which they do, different from other men, instead of searching out their own lapses from rectitude, which are punished by Allah.

وَقَالُواْ مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِن آيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا ...

132. They said (to Moses):

"Whatever be the signs thou bringest, to work therewith the sorcery on us,

C1089. A type of obstinacy and resistance to Allah's message. As they believed in sorcery and magic, they thought anything unusual was but sorcery and magic, and hardened their hearts against Truth.

... فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٢)

we shall never believe in thee."

... فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ

133. So We sent (plagues) on them, wholesale death,

C1090. Tufan: a widespread calamity, causing wholesale death and destruction.

It may be a flood, or a typhoon, or an epidemic, among men or cattle. Perhaps the last is meant, if we may interpret by the Old Testament story.

See also Exod. 9:3, 9, 15; 12:29.

... وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ ...

Locusts, Lice, Frogs, and Blood:

... آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلاَتٍ...

signs openly Self-explained;

C1091. In 17:101, the reference is to nine Clear Signs. These are:

1. the Rod (7:107),
2. the Radiant Hand (7:108),
3. the years of drought or shortage of water (7:130),
4. short crops (7:130), and mentioned in this verse, viz.,
5. epidemics among men and beasts,
6. locusts,
7. lice,
8. frogs, and
9. the water turning to blood.

...فَاسْتَكْبَرُواْ وَكَانُواْ قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ (١٣٣)

but they were steeped in arrogance, a people given to sin.

وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِندَكَ ...

134. Every time the penalty fell on them, they said:

"O Moses! on our behalf call on thy Lord in virtue of his promise to thee:

...لَئِن كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ (١٣٤)

if thou wilt remove the penalty from us we shall truly believe in thee,

and we shall send away the children of Israel with thee."

C1092. The demand of Moses was two-fold:

- come to Allah and cease from oppression, and
- let me take Israel out of Egypt.

At first it was laughed at and rejected with scorn. When the Plagues came for punishment, each time the Egyptians suffered, they promised amendment and begged Moses to intercede and cause the plague to cease. But every time it ceased, they went back to their evil attitude, until the final retribution came.

This is a type of the sinner's attitude for all times.

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ هُم بَالِغُوهُ ...

135. But every time We removed the penalty from them according to a fixed term which they had to fulfil,

C1093. The intercession of Moses was to pray. Each plague or penalty had its appointed term in Allah's decree. That term was duly fulfilled before the plague ceased.

The intercession meant two things:

1. that Allah's name was invoked and His presence duly brought home to the mind and heart of the sinner who promised repentance, and
2. that the sinner was given a further chance when the prayer was accepted.

This again is a universal truth.

... إِذَا هُمْ يَنكُثُونَ (١٣٥)

Behold! they broke their word!

فَانتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ...

136. So We exacted retribution from them:

C1094. When at last Pharaoh let Israel go, they selected, not the highway to Canaan, along the Mediterranean and by Gaza, because they were unarmed and would have encountered immediate opposition there, but by way of the wilderness of Sinai.

They crossed the Red Sea, while Pharaoh's host which came in pursuit was drowned. Cf. 2:50. (R).

...فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ (١٣٦)

We drowned them in the sea, because they rejected Our signs, and failed to take warning from them.

C1095. Where was the Council of Pharaoh held in which Moses addressed Pharaoh?

Egypt's primary capital in the XVIIIth Dynasty was Thebes (Not-Ammon), but that was more than 400 miles to the south of the Delta, in whose corner Israel dwelt. Memphis, on the apex of the Delta, a little south of where Cairo is now, was also over 100 miles from Israel's habitations.

The interview must have been either in a Palace near Goshen, where the Israelites dwelt, or in Zoan (Tanis), the Deltaic capital built by a former dynasty, which was of course still available for the reigning dynasty, and which was not far from the Israelite settlement.

وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي

بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا ...

137. And We made a people, considered weak (and of no account), inheritors of lands in both east and west, lands whereon We sent down our blessings.

...وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَى عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ بِمَا صَبَرُواْ...

The fair promise of the Lord was fulfilled for the children of Israel, because they had patience and constancy,

...وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُواْ يَعْرِشُونَ (١٣٧)

and We levelled to the ground the great works and fine buildings which Pharaoh and his people erected (with such pride).

C1096. Israel, which was despised, became a great and glorious nation under Solomon. He had goodly territory, and was doubly blest. His land and people were prosperous, and he wits blessed with wisdom from Allah. His sway and his fame spread east and west. And thus Allah's promise to Israel was fulfilled.

Note that Syria and Palestine had once been under the sway of Egypt. At the same time the proud and rebellious Pharaoh and his people were brought low. The splendid monuments which they had erected with so much skill and pride were mingled with the dust. Their great cities-Thebes (or No-Ammon), Memphis (or Noph, sacred to the Bull of Osiris), and the other splendid cities, became as if they had not existed, and archaeologists have had to dig up their ruins from the sands.

The splendid monuments-temples, palaces, tombs, statues, columns, and stately structures of all kinds-were buried in the sands. Even monuments like the Great Sphinx, which seem to defy the ages, were partly buried in the sands, and owe their rescue to the comparatively recent researches of archaeologists.

As late as 1743 Richard Pococke in his Travels in Egypt (p. 41), remarked:

"Most of those pyramids are very much ruined." (R)

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ الْبَحْرَ ...

138. We took the children of Israel (with safety) across the sea.

... فَأَتَوْاْ عَلَى قَوْمٍ يَعْكُفُونَ عَلَى أَصْنَامٍ لَّهُمْ...

They came upon a people devoted entirely to some idols they had.

C1097. Who were these people?

We are now in the Sinai Peninsula. Two conjectures are possible.

1. The Amalekites of the Sinai Peninsula were at perpetual war with the Israelites. They were probably an idolatrous nation, but we have very little knowledge of their cult.

2. From Egyptian history we know that Egypt had worked from very ancient times some copper mines in Sinai. An Egyptian settlement may have been here. Like all mining camps it contained from the beginning the dregs of the population.

   When the mines ceased to be worked, the settlement, or what remained of it, must have degenerated further. Cut off from civilisation, its cult must have become still narrower, without the refining influences which a progressive nation applies even to its idolatry.

   Perhaps Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis, lost all its allegorical meaning for them, and only gross and superstitious rites remained among them.

The text speaks of "some idols they had," implying that they had merely a detached fragment of a completer religion.

This was a snare in the path of the Israelites, whom many generations of slavery in Egypt had debased into ignorance and superstition.

...قَالُواْ يَا مُوسَى اجْعَل لَّنَا إِلَـهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ...

They said: "O Moses! fashion for us a god like unto the gods they have."

...قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ (١٣٨)

He said: "Surely ye are a people without knowledge.

إِنَّ هَـؤُلاء مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمْ فِيهِ ...

139. "As to these folk, the cult they are in is (but) a fragment of a ruin,

C1098. If conjecture 2 in the last note is correct, this idolatrous worship was but the fragment of a ruin from Egypt, and Moses' reproach is biting:

> "You, who have been rescued from the bondage of living Egypt, -do you hanker after the bondage of a dead cult debased even from that from which you have been rescued?"

Mutabbar: broken in pieces, smashed into fragments, destroyed.

... وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (١٣٩)

and vain is the (worship) which they practice."

قَالَ أَغَيْرَ اللّهِ أَبْغِيكُمْ إِلَـهًا...

140. He said:

"Shall I seek for you a god other than the (true) Allah,

...وَهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (١٤٠)

when it is Allah who hath endowed you with gifts above the nations?"

وَإِذْ أَنجَيْنَاكُم مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَونَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوَءَ الْعَذَابِ...

141. And remember, We rescued you from Pharaoh's people, who afflicted you with the worst of penalties,

...يُقَتِّلُونَ أَبْنَاءكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءكُمْ...

who slew your male children and saved alive your females:

...وَفِي ذَلِكُم بَلاء مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ (١٤١)

in that was a momentous trial from your Lord.

C1099. This is Allah's reminder to Israel through the mouth of Moses. There was a double trial:

1. while the bondage lasted, the people were to learn patience and constancy in the midst of affliction:

2. when they were rescued, they were to learn humility; justice, and righteous deeds of prosperity.

Section 17

وَوَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى ثَلاَثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتْمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرٍ...

142. We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed (the period) with ten (more):

...فَتَمَّ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً...

thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord, forty nights.

C1100. The forty nights' exclusion of Moses on the Mount may be compared with the forty days fast of Jesus in the wilderness before he took up his ministry (Matt. 4:2).

In each case the Prophets lived alone apart from their people, before they came into the full blaze of the events of their Ministry.

...وَقَالَ مُوسَى لأَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي...

And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): "Act for me amongst my people:

...وَأَصْلِحْ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (١٤٢)

do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief."

C1101. When for any reason the man of God is absent from his people, his duty of leadership (Khalifah) should be taken up by his brother, -not necessarily a blood-brother, but one of his society or brotherhood.

The deputy should discharge it in all humility, remembering three things:

1. that he is only a deputy, and bound to follow the directions of his Principal,
2. that right and justice are of the essence of power, and

3. that mischief gets its best chance to raise its head in the absence of the Principal, and that the deputy should always guard against the traps laid for him in the Principal's absence.

وَلَمَّا جَاء مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ...

143. When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him,

...قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرْ إِلَيْكَ...

He said: "O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee."

C1102. Even the best of us may be betrayed into overweening confidence of spiritual ambition not yet justified by the stage we have reached, Moses had already seen part of the glory of Allah in his Radiant White Hand, that shone with the glory of Divine light (7:108, n. 1076). But he was still in the flesh, and the mission to his people was to begin after the Covenant of Sinai. It was premature of him to ask to see Allah.

Having been blinded by the excessive Glory, he could not see with the physical eye. But he could get a glimpse of the reality through faith, and he hastened to proclaim his faith. (R).

...قَالَ لَن تَرَانِي وَلَـكِنِ انظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ ...

Allah said: "By no means canst thou see Me (direct);

C1103. But Allah -the Cherisher of all His creatures- treats even our improper requests with mercy, compassion, and understanding.

Even the reflected glory of Allah is too great for the grosser substance of matter. The peak on which it shone became as powder before the ineffable glory, and Moses could only live by being taken out of his bodily senses.

When he recovered from his swoon, he saw the true position, and the distance between our grosser bodily senses and the true splendour of Allah's glory. He at once turned in penitence to Allah, and confessed his faith.

... فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي...

but look upon the mount; if it abide in its place then shalt thou see Me."

...فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ موسَى صَعِقًا...

When his Lord manifested his glory on the mount, He made it as dust and Moses fell down in a swoon.

...فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ...

When he recovered his senses he said:

...سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ ...

"Glory be to Thee! to Thee I turn in repentance,

... وَأَنَاْ أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٤٣)

and I am the first to believe."

C1104. "First to believe." Cf. the expression;

"first of those who bow to Allah in Islam" in 6:14 and 6:163.

"First" means here not the first in time, but most zealous in faith.

It has the intensive and not the comparative meaning.

قَالَ يَا مُوسَى إِنِّي اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ...

144. (Allah) said: "O Moses! I have chosen thee above (other) men,

C1105. "Above (other) men": i.e. among his contemporaries.

He had a high mission, and he had the honour of speaking to Allah.

... بِرِسَالاَتِي وَبِكَلاَمِي...

by the mission I (have given thee) and the words I (have spoken to thee):

...فَخُذْ مَا آتَيْتُكَ وَكُن مِّنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (١٤٤)

take then the (revelation) which I give thee, and be of those who give thanks."

C1106. Allah's revelation is for the benefit of His creatures, who should receive it with reverence and gratitude.

While Moses was having these great spiritual experiences on the Mount, his people below were ungrateful enough to forget Allah and make a golden calf for worship (7:147).

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الأَلْوَاحِ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيلاً لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

145. And We ordained laws for him in the tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things,

...فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَأْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَأْخُذُواْ بِأَحْسَنِهَا...

(and said): "Take and hold these with firmness, and enjoin thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts:

C1107. The Tablets of the Law contained the essential Truth, from which were derived tile positive injunctions and prohibitions, explanations and interpretations, which it was the function of the prophetic office to hold up for the people to follow.

The precepts would contain, as the Shariah does,

- matters absolutely prohibited,
- matters not prohibited but disapproved,
- matters about which there was no prohibition or injunction, but in which conduct was to be regulated by circumstances;
- matters of positive and universal duty,
- matters recommended for those whose zeal was sufficient to enable them to work on higher than minimum standards.

No soul is burdened beyond its capacity; but we are asked to seek the best and highest possible for us in conduct.

...سَأُرِيكُمْ...

soon shall I show you

C1108. Notice the transition from the "We" of authority and honour and impersonal dignity, to the **"I"** of personal concern in specially guiding the righteous.

... دَارَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (١٤٥)

the homes of the wicked, (how they lie desolate)."

C1109. There are two meanings, one literal and the other figurative.

- Literally, the homes of the wicked, both individuals and nations, lie desolate, as in the case of the ancient Egyptians, the 'Ad., and the Thamud.

- Figuratively, the "home" shows the inner and more intimate condition of people. If you are dazzled by the outward prosperity of the ungodly, examine their inner anguish and fear and insecurity, and you will thank Allah for His gracious guidance.

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ...

146. Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right,

وَإِن يَرَوْاْ كُلَّ آيَةٍ لاَّ يُؤْمِنُواْ بِهَا...

them will I turn away from My signs, they will not believe in them;

C1110. The argument may be simplified thus in paraphrase.

The right is established on the earth as Allah created it: Nature recognises and obeys Allah's law as fixed for each portion of Creation. But man, because of the gift of Will, sometimes upsets this balance. The root-cause is his arrogance, as it was in the case of Iblis.

Allah's Signs are everywhere, but if they are rejected with scorn and blasphemy, Allah will withdraw His grace, for sin hardens the heart and makes it impervious to the truth.

Want of faith produces a kind of blindness to spiritual facts, a kind of deafness to the warnings of a Day of Account. If we had contumaciously rejected faith, can we hope for anything but justice,-the just punishment of our sins? (R).

...وَإِن يَرَوْاْ سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لاَ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلاً...

and if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way;

...وَإِن يَرَوْاْ سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلاً...

but if they see the way of error that is the way they will adopt;

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُواْ عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ (١٤٦)

for they rejected Our signs, and failed to take warning from them.

C1111. Rejected Our Signs: again a return to the Plural of impersonal Dignity and Authority, from the singular of personal concern in granting grace and guidance to the Righteous.

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا وَلِقَاء الآخِرَةِ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ..

147. Those who reject Our signs and the meeting in the hereafter, vain are their deeds:

...هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلاَّ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٧)

can they expect to be rewarded except as they have wrought?

Section 18

... وَاتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوسَى مِن بَعْدِهِ مِنْ حُلِيِّهِمْ عِجْلاً

148. The people of Moses made in his absence, out of their ornaments,

C1112. The making of the golden calf and its worship by the Israelites during the absence of Moses on the Mount were referred to in 2:51, and some further details are given in 20:95-97.

Notice how in each case only those points are referred to which are necessary to the argument in hand.

A narrator whose object is mere narration, tells the story in all its details, and is done with it. A consummate artist, whose object is to enforce lessons, brings out each point in its proper place. Master of all details, he does not ramble, but with supreme literary skill, just

adds the touch that is necessary in each place to complete the spiritual picture. His object is not a story but a lesson.

Here notice the contrast between the intense spiritual communion of Moses on the Mount and the simultaneous corruption of his people in his absence. We can understand his righteous indignation and bitter grief (7:150).

The people had melted all their gold ornaments, and made the image of a calf like the bull of Osiris in the city of Memphis in the wicked Egypt that they had turned their backs upon.

... جَسَدًا لَّهُ خُوَارٌ...

the image of a calf, (for worship):

C1113. Image of a Calf: Jasad is literally a body, especially the body of a man according to Khalil quoted by Ragib.

In 21:8, it is used obviously for the human body, as also in 38:34; but in the latter case, the idea of an image, without any real life or soul, is also suggested.

In the present passage I understand many suggestions:

1. that it was a mere image, without life-,
2. as such, it could not low, therefore the appearance of lowing, mentioned immediately afterwards, was a fraud:
3. unlike its prototype, the bull of Osiris, it had not even the symbolism of Osiris behind it;

   the Osiris myth, in the living religion of Egypt, had at least some ethical principles behind it.

...أَلَمْ يَرَوْاْ أَنَّهُ لاَ يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلاَ يَهْدِيهِمْ سَبِيلاً...

it seemed to low: did they not see that it could neither speak to them nor show them the way?

C1114. The lowing of the golden calf was obviously a deception practised by the promoters of the cult.

Lytton in his "Last Days of Pompeii" exposes the deception practised by the priests of Isis. Men hidden behind images imposed on the credulity of the commonalty.

...اتَّخَذُوهُ وَكَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ (١٤٨)

They took it for worship and they did wrong.

وَلَمَّا سُقِطَ فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ وَرَأَوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوا قَالُوا...

149. When they repented, and saw that they had erred, they said:

...لَئِن لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (١٤٩)

"If our Lord have not mercy upon us and forgive us, we shall indeed be of those who perish."

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا...

150. When Moses came back to his people, angry and grieved,

...قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُونِي مِن بَعْدِيَ أَعَجِلْتُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ...

he said:

"Evil it is that ye have done in my place in my absence:

did ye make haste to bring on the judgment of your Lord?"

C1115. Did ye make haste... ?

'In your impatience, could you not wait for me?

Your lapse into idolatry has only hastened Allah's wrath. If you had only waited, I was bringing to you in the Tablets the most excellent teaching in the commands of Allah.'

There is subtle irony in the speech of Moses.

There is also a play upon words:

- **'ijl:** calf: and
- **'ajila:** to make haste:

no translation can bring out these niceties.

...وَأَلْقَى الأَلْوَاحَ ...

He put down the tablets,

C1116. Put down the Tablets:

we are not told that the Tablets were broken: in fact 7:154 (below) shows that they were whole. They contained Allah's Message. There is a touch of disrespect (if not blasphemy) in supposing that Allah's Messenger broke the Tablets in his incontinent rage, as is stated in the Old Testament:

> "Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and brake them beneath the Mount." (Exod. 32:19).

On this point and also on the point that Aaron (in the Old Testament story) ordered the gold to be brought, made a molten calf, fashioned it with a graving tool, and built an altar before the calf (Exod. 32:2-5), our version differs from that of the Old Testament.

We cannot believe that Aaron, who was appointed by Allah to assist Moses as Allah's Messenger, could descend so low as to seduce the people into idolatry, whatever his human weaknesses might be.

... وَأَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ يَجُرُّهُ إِلَيْهِ...

seized his brother by (the hair of) his head, and dragged him to him.

C1117. Moses was but human. Remembering the charge he had given to Aaron (7:142) he had a just grievance at the turn events had taken. But he did not wreak his vengeance on the Tablets of Allah's law by breaking them. He laid hands on his brother, and his brother at once explained.

...قَالَ ابْنَ أُمَّ إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضْعَفُونِي وَكَادُواْ يَقْتُلُونَنِي...

Aaron said:

"Son of my mother! the people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slaying me!

فَلاَ تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الأَعْدَاء وَلاَ تَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٥٠)...

make not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune,

nor count thou me amongst the people of sin."

C1118. Aaron's speech is full of tenderness and regret. He addresses Moses as "son of my mother." -an affectionate term.

He explains how the turbulent people nearly killed him for resisting them. And he states in the clearest terms that the idolatry neither originated with him nor had his consent.

In 20:85, we are told that a fellow described as the Samiri had led them astray. We shall discuss this when we come to that passage.

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلأَخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ...

151. Moses prayed:

"O my Lord! forgive me and my brother! admit us to Thy mercy!

C1119. As Moses was convinced that his brother was guiltless, his wrath was turned to gentleness. He prayed for forgiveness -for himself and his brother:

- for himself because of his wrath and
- for his brother because he had been unable to suppress idolatry among his people.

And like a true leader that he is, he identifies himself with his lieutenant for all that has happened.

Even more, he identifies himself with his whole people in his prayer in verse 155 below.

Herein, again, is a type of what the Holy Prophet Muhammad did for his people.

وَأَنتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (١٥١)...

for Thou art the Most Merciful of those who sow mercy!"

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُواْ الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

152. Those who took the calf (for worship) will indeed be overwhelmed with wrath from their Lord, and with shame in this life:

C1120. The consequences were twofold:

- spiritual, in that Allah's grace is withdrawn, and
- even in the present life of this world, in that godly men also shun the sinner's company, and he is isolated.

...وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ (١٥٢)

thus do We recompense those who invent (falsehoods).

وَالَّذِينَ عَمِلُواْ السَّيِّئَاتِ ثُمَّ تَابُواْ مِن بَعْدِهَا وَآمَنُواْ...

153. But those who do wrong but repent thereafter and (truly) believe,

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِن بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٥٣)

verily Thy Lord is thereafter Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَن مُّوسَى الْغَضَبُ أَخَذَ الأَلْوَاحَ...

154. When the anger of Moses was appeased, he took up the tablets:

...وَفِي نُسْخَتِهَا هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُونَ (١٥٤)

in the writing thereon was guidance and mercy for such as fear their Lord.

وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلاً لِّمِيقَاتِنَا...

155. And Moses chose seventy of his people for Our place of meeting:

C1121. Seventy of the elders were taken up to the Mount, but left at some distance from the place where Allah spoke to Moses.

They were to be silent witnesses, but their faith was not yet complete, and they dared to say to Moses: "We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah in public" (2:55).

They were dazed with thunder and lightning, and might have been destroyed but for Allah's mercy on the intercession of Moses.

...فَلَمَّا أَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ ...

when they were seized with violent quaking, he prayed:

C1122. Rajfah: violent quaking, earthquake.

I take it to refer to the same event as is described by the word Sd'iqat in 2:55, the thunder and lightning that shook the mountainside.

... رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُم مِّن قَبْلُ وَإِيَّايَ...

"O my Lord! if it had been Thy will Thou couldst have destroyed, long before, both them and me:

...أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاء مِنَّا...

wouldst Thou destroy us for the deeds of the foolish one among us?

...إِنْ هِيَ إِلاَّ فِتْنَتُكَ...

This is no more than Thy trial:

C1123. Moses was guiltless, but he identifies himself with his whole people, and intercedes with Allah on their behalf.

He recognises that it was a trial, in which some of his people failed to stand the test. Such failure was worthy of punishment. But he pleads for mercy for such as erred from weakness and not from contumacy, and were truly repentant, although all who erred were in their several degrees worthy of punishment.

...تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَن تَشَاء ...

by it Thou causest whom Thou wilt to stray,

C1124. Cf. 2:26.

... وَتَهْدِي مَن تَشَاء ...

and Thou leadest whom Thou wilt into the right path.

...أنتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا...

Thou art our protector: so forgive us and give us Thy mercy;

...وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ (١٥٥)

for Thou art the best of those who forgive.

...وَاكْتُبْ لَنَا فِي هَـٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدْنَـا إِلَيْكَ...

156. "And ordain for us that which is good, in this life and in the hereafter:

for we have turned unto Thee."

...قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاء وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ...

He said:

"With My punishment I visit whom I will; but My mercy extendeth to all things.

C1125. Allah's mercy is in and for all things. All nature subserves a common purpose, which is for the good of all His creatures.

Our faculties and our understandings are all instances of His grace and mercy. Each unit or factor among his creatures benefits from the others and receives them as Allah's mercy to itself: and in its turn, each contributes to the benefit of the others and is thus an instance of Allah's mercy to them.

His mercy is universal and all-pervasive; while His justice and punishment are reserved for those who swerve from His plan and (to use a mediaeval juridical formula) go out of His Peace.

...فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَـاةَ...

That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those

- who do right,
- and practice regular charity,

...وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٥٦)

- and those who believe in Our signs;

C1126. The personal grace and mercy -and their opposite- are referred to the singular pronoun "I" while the impersonal Law, by which Allah's Signs operate in His universe, is referred to the plural pronoun of authority and dignity, **"We"**.

C.87 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(7:158-171)

With the advent of the Holy Prophet,
The light and guidance which he brought
For all mankind from Allah
Superseded the earlier Law for the Jews.
The good and the upright among them
Followed the new Light, but
The rest were scattered through the earth.

Section 20

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الأُمِّيَّ...

157. "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet,

...الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِندَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالإِنْجِيلِ...

whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures); in the law and the Gospel;

C1127. In this verse is a prefiguring, to Moses, of the Arabian Messenger, the last and greatest of the messengers of Allah. Prophecies about him will be found in the Tawrah and the Injil.

In the reflex of the Tawrah as now accepted by the Jews, Moses says: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deut. 18:15):

the only Prophet who brought a Shariah like that of Moses was Muhammad Al-Mustafa, and he came of the house of Ismail the brother of Isaac the father of Israel.

In the reflex of the Gospel as now accepted by the Christians, Christ promised another Comforter (John 14:16): the Greek word Paraclete which the Christians interpret as referring to the Holy Spirit is by our Doctors taken to be Periclyte, which would be the Greek form of Ahmad. See 61:6.

...يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ...

for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil:

...وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَآئِثَ...

he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure);

...وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالأَغْلاَلَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ .....

He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them.

C1128. Aglal: plural of gullun, a yoke, an iron collar.

In the formalism and exclusiveness of the Jews there were many restrictions which were removed by Islam, a religion of freedom in the faith of Allah, of universality in the variety of races, languages, manners and customs.

...فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُواْ النُّورَ الَّذِيَ أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ...

So it is those who believe in him, honor him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him,

C1129. Light which is sent down with him: the words are "with him", not "to him", emphasizing the fact that the Light which he brought illumines every one who has the privilege of joining his great and universal Fellowship.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (١٥٧)

it is they who will prosper."

C1130. Falah: prosperity in its general sense as well as in its spiritual sense.

- In the general sense it means that right conduct is the only door to happiness and well-being.
- In the spiritual sense it means that Faith and its fruits (right conduct) are the only gates to salvation.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي...

158. Say:

"O men! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah,

C1131. Our attention having been directed to various prophets, who were sent with missions to their several peoples, and in each of whose careers there is some prefigurement of the life of the last and greatest of them, we are now asked to listen to the proclamation of Muhammad's universal mission. We contemplate no longer, after this, partial truths.

It is not now a question of saving Israel from the bondage of Egypt, nor teaching Midian the ethics of business, nor reclaiming the people of Lut from sexual sin or Thamud from the sin of oppression in power, or 'Ad from arrogance and ancestor worship. Now are set forth plainly the issues of Life and Death, the Message of Allah, the One Universal God to all mankind.

...لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

to Whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth:

...لا إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ يُحْيِـي وَيُمِيتُ...

there is no god but He:

it is He that giveth both life and death.

...فَآمِنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ...

So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believed in Allah and His words:

C1132. "Unlettered," as applied to the Prophet here and in verse 157 above, has three special significations.

1. He was not versed in human learning: yet he was full of the highest wisdom, and had a most wonderful knowledge of the previous Scriptures. This was a proof of his inspiration.

   It was a miracle of the highest kind, a "Sign", which every one could test then, and every one can test now.

2. All organized human knowledge tends to be crystallized, to acquire a partial bias or flavour of some "school" of thought. The highest Teacher had to be free from any such taint, just as a clean slate is necessary if a perfectly clear and bold message has to be written on it.

3. In 3:20 and 62:2, the epithet is applied to the Pagan Arabs, because, before the advent of Islam, they were unlearned.

That the last and greatest of the Prophets should arise among them, and they and their language be made the vehicle of the new, full and universal light, has also a meaning, which is explained in C. 12-15.

...وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٥٨)

follow him that (so) ye may be guided."

وَمِن قَوْمِ مُوسَى أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ (١٥٩)

159. Of the people of Moses there is a section who guide and do justice in the light of truth.

...وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَمًا

160. We divided them into twelve tribes or nations.

C1133. We now come to some incidents in Jewish history, which have been referred to in 2:57-60. Here they have special reference to their bearing on the times when early Islam was preached.

The Twelve Tribes and the parable drawn from them have been explained in n. 73 to 2:60.

...وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى إِذِ اسْتَسْقَاهُ قَوْمُهُ أَنِ اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ...

We directed Moses by inspiration, when his (thirsty) people asked him for water:

"Strike the rock with thy staff":

...فَانبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ...

out of it there gushed forth twelve springs:

each group knew its own place for water.

...وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى...

We gave them the shade of clouds, and sent down to them manna and quails, (saying):

...كُلُواْ مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ...

"Eat of the good things We have provided for you":

...وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَـكِن كَانُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (١٦٠)

(but they rebelled): to Us they did no harm, but they harmed their own souls.

C1134. Cf. 2:57 and n. 71.

وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْكُنُواْ هَـذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُواْ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ ...

161. And remember it was said to them:

"Dwell in this town and eat therein as ye wish,

C1135. As in 7:19, we may construe "eat" here to mean not only eating literally, but enjoying the good things of life.

...وَقُولُواْ حِطَّةٌ وَادْخُلُواْ الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَاتِكُمْ... ...

but say the word of humility and enter the gate in a posture of humility; We shall forgive you your faults;

...سَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٦١)

We shall increase (the portion of) those who do good."

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ مِنْهُمْ قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ...

162. But the transgressors among them changed the word from that which had been given them;

...فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاء بِمَا كَانُواْ يَظْلِمُونَ (١٦٢)

so We sent on them a plague from heaven, for that they repeatedly transgressed.

C1136. Cf. 2:58-59, and n. 72.

The story is here told by way of parable for the times of Islam. Hence we have a few verbal changes: e.g., "dwell in this town" instead of "enter this town." etc.

Section 21

وَاسْأَلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ...

163. Ask them concerning the town standing close by the sea.

...إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي السَّبْتِ ...

Behold! they transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath.

C1137. Cf. 2:65 and n. 79.

Fishing, like every other activity, was prohibited to Israel on the Sabbath day. As this practice was usually observed, the fish used to come up with a sense of security to their water channels or pools openly on the Sabbath day, but not on other days when fishing was open.

This was a great temptation to the law-breakers, which they could not resist. Some of their men of piety protested, but it had no effect. When their transgressions, which we may suppose, extended to other commandments, passed beyond bounds, the punishment came. (R).

... إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَّعاً...

For on the day of their Sabbath their fish did come to them, openly holding up their heads,

...وَيَوْمَ لاَ يَسْبِتُونَ لاَ تَأْتِيهِمْ ...

but on the day they had no Sabbath, they came not:

...كَذَلِكَ نَبْلُوهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ (١٦٣)

thus did We make a trial of them, for they were given to transgression.

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا اللّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا...

164. When some of them said:

"Why do ye preach to a people whom Allah will destroy or visit with a terrible punishment?"

C1138. There are always people who wonder, no doubt sincerely, what good it is to preach to the wicked. The answer is given to them here:

- every man who sees evil must speak out against it; it is his duty and responsibility to Allah;
- there is always a chance that the warning may have effect and save a precious soul.

This passage has a special meaning for the times when our Holy Prophet was preaching in Makkah, apparently without results. But it applies to all times.

...قَالُواْ مَعْذِرَةً إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (١٦٤)

Said the preachers: "To discharge our duty to your Lord and perchance they may fear Him."

فَلَمَّا نَسُواْ مَا ذُكِّرُواْ بِهِ أَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ...

165. When they disregarded the warnings that had been given them, We rescued those who forbade evil;

...وَأَخَذْنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ بِعَذَابٍ بَئِيسٍ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْسُقُونَ (١٦٥)

but We visited the wrongdoers with a grievous punishment, because they were given to transgression.

فَلَمَّا عَتَوْاْ عَن مَّا نُهُواْ عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ ...

166. When in their insolence they transgressed (all) prohibition, We said to them:

كُونُواْ قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ (١٦٦) ...

"Be ye apes, despised and rejected."

C1139. Cf. 2:65 and n. 79.

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَن يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ...

167. Behold! thy Lord did declare that He would send against them, to the Day of Judgment, those who would afflict them with grievous penalty.

C1140. See Deut, 11:28:

> "A curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day":

also Deut, 28:49;

> "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth: a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand";

and many other passages.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَسَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٦٧)

Thy Lord is quick in retribution,

but he is also Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ أُمَمًا...

168. We broke them up into sections on this earth.

C1141. The dispersal of the Jews is a great fact in the world's history. Nor has their persecution ended yet, nor is it likely to end as far as we can foresee.

...مِّنْهُمُ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَلِكَ...

There are among them some that are the righteous, and some that are the opposite.

...وَبَلَوْنَاهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (١٦٨)

We have tried them with both prosperity and adversity: in order that they might turn (to us).

...فَخَلَفَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَـذَا الأدْنَى

169. After them succeeded an (evil) generation:

they inherited the Book, but they chose (for themselves) the vanities of this world,

C1142. Merely inheriting a Book, or doing lip service to it, does not make a nation righteous. If they succumb to the temptations of the world, their hypocrisy becomes all the more glaring. "High finance" is one of these temptations.

Cf. also 2:80: "the Fire shall not touch us except for a few numbered days":

and 2:88, about their blasphemous self-sufficiency.

...وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا...

saying (for excuse):

"(everything) will be forgiven us."

...وَإِن يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ...

(Even so), if similar vanities came their way, they would (again) seize them.

...أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِم مِّيثَاقُ الْكِتَابِ أَن لاَّ يَقُولُواْ عَلَى اللّهِ إِلاَّ الْحَقَّ ...

Was not the Covenant of the Book taken from them, that they would not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth?

C1143. Cf. Exod. 19:5-8; 24:3; 34:27; and many other passages.

... وَدَرَسُواْ مَا فِيهِ...

And they study what is in the Book.

...وَالدَّارُ الآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٦٩)

But best for the righteous is the home in the hereafter:

will ye not understand?

وَالَّذِينَ يُمَسَّكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ

الْمُصْلِحِينَ (١٧٠)

170. As to those who hold fast by the Book and establish regular prayer; never shall We suffer the reward of the righteous to perish.

وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ...

171. When We shook the mount over them, as if it had been a canopy, and they thought it was going to fall on them

...خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُم بِقُوَّةٍ ...

(We said): "Hold firmly, to what We have given you

C1144. Cf. 2:63 and n 78.

... وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٧١)

and bring (even) to remembrance what is therein; perchance ye may fear Allah."

C1145. Therein: in the Book or Revelation, in "what We have given you."

C.88 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(7:172-206)

Mankind have the nature of good
Created within them: yet doth Allah
By His Signs keep up a constant
Reminder to men of His Holy Names.
Those who err scarce realise
How gradually they fall into sin.
Their respite has a term; the doom
Must come, and it may be on a sudden.
So humbly draw nigh to the Lord,
Declare His glory, and rejoice in His service.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ...

172. When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants,

C1146. This passage has led to differences of opinion in interpretation.

According to the dominant opinion of commentators each individual in the posterity of Adam had a separate existence from the time of Adam, and a Covenant was taken from all of them, which is binding accordingly on each individual.

The words in the text refer to the descendants of the Children of Adam, i.e., to all humanity, born or unborn, without any limit of time. Adam's seed carries on the existence of Adam and succeeds to his spiritual heritage.

Humanity has been given by Allah certain powers and faculties, whose possession creates on our side special spiritual obligations which we must faithfully discharge: see 5:1. and n. 682. These obligations may from a legal point of view be considered as arising from implied Covenants.

In the preceding verse (7:171) a reference was made to the implied Covenant of the Jewish nation.

Now we consider the implied Covenant of the whole of humanity, for the Holy Prophet's mission was world-wide. (R).

...وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ...

and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): "Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?"

...قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا... ...

They said: "Yea! we do testify!"

C1147. The Covenant is completed in this way. We acknowledge that Allah is our Creator, Cherisher, and Sustainer: therefore we acknowledge our duty to Him:

when we so testify concerning ourselves, the obligation is as it were assumed by us; for it follows from our very nature when it is pure and uncorrupted.

...أَن تَقُولُواْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ (١٧٢)

(This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment:

"Of this we were never mindful."

أَوْ تَقُولُواْ إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّن بَعْدِهِمْ ...

173. Or lest ye should say:

"Our fathers before us may have taken false gods but we are (their) descendants after them:

...أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (١٧٣)

wilt thou then destroy us because of the deeds of men who were futile?"

C1148. The latent faculties in man are enough to teach him the distinction between good and evil, to warn him of the dangers that beset his life.

But to awaken and stimulate them, a personal appeal is made to each individual through the "still small voice" within him. This in its uncorrupted state acknowledges the truth and, as it were, swears its Covenant with Allah. There is, therefore, no excuse for any individual to say, either,

- that he was unmindful, or
- that he should not be punished for the sins of his fathers, because his punishment (if any) comes from his personal responsibility and is for his own rejection of faith and the higher spiritual influences. (R).

وَكَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الآيَاتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (١٧٤)

174. Thus do We explain the signs in detail! and perchance they may turn (unto Us).

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِيَ آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا...

175. Relate to them the story of the man to whom We sent our signs,

C1149. Commentators differ whether this story or parable refers to a particular individual, and if so, to whom.

The story of Balaam the seer, who was called out by Israel's enemies to curse Israel, but who blessed Israel instead, (Num. 22-24) is quite different. It is better to take the parable in general sense.

There are men, of talents and position, to whom great opportunities of spiritual insight come, but they perversely pass them by. Satan sees his opportunity and catches them up. Instead of rising higher in the spiritual world, their selfish and worldly desires and ambitions pull them down, and they are lost.

...فَانسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ (١٧٥)

but he passed them by:

so Satan followed him up, and he went astray.

...وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَـٰكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ...

176. If it had been Our will We should have elevated him with our signs; but he inclined to the earth, and followed his own vain desires.

C1150. Notice the contrast between the exalted spiritual honours which they would have received from Allah if they had followed His Will, and the earthly desires which eventually bring them low to the position of beasts and worse.

...فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ ...

His similitude is that of a dog:

... إِن تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ ...

if you attack him, he lolls out his tongue, or

C1151. The dog, especially in the hot weather, lolls out his tongue, whether he is attacked and pursued and is tired, or he is left alone. It is part of his nature to slobber. So with the man who rejects Allah.

Whether he is warned or left alone, he continues to throw out his dirty saliva. The injury he will do will be to his own soul. But there may be infection in his evil example,. So we must protect others. And we must never give up hope of his own amendment. So we must continue to warn him and make him think.

...أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَث ...

if you leave him alone he (still) lolls out his tongue.

... ذَّلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا...

That is the similitude of those who reject our signs;

...فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (١٧٦)

so relate the story; perchance they may reflect.

سَاء مَثَلاً الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنفُسَهُمْ كَانُواْ يَظْلِمُونَ (١٧٧)

177. Evil as an example are people who reject Our signs and wrong their own souls.

مَن يَهْدِ اللّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِي...

178. Whom Allah doth guide, he is on the right path:

...وَمَن يُضْلِلْ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (١٧٨)

whom He rejects from His guidance, such are the persons who perish.

C1152. Those who reject Allah will be deprived of Allah's grace and guidance. His Mercy is always open for sincere repentance.

But with each step downwards, they go lower and lower, until they perish.

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ...

179. Many are the Jinns and men, We have made for Hell:

...لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لاَّ يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا...

They have hearts wherewith they understand not,

...وَلَـهُمْ أعْيُنٌ لاَّ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا...

eyes wherewith they see not,

C1153. Cf. 2:18.

Though they have apparently all the faculties of reason and perception, they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work, and they go headlong into hell. They are, as it were, made for Hell.

...وَلَـهُمْ آذَانٌ لاَّ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا...

and ears wherewith they hear not.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ كَالأنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أضَلُّ...

They are like cattle, nay more misguided:

...أُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ (١٧٩)

for they are heedless (of warning).

...وَلِلّهِ الأسْمَاء الْحُسْنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا...

180. The most beautiful names belong to Allah:

so call on Him by them;

C1154. As we contemplate Allah's nature, we can use the most beautiful names to express His attributes. There are hundreds of such attributes. In the opening Surah, we have this indicated in a few comprehensive words, such as Rahman (most Gracious), Rahim (most Merciful), Rabb-ul-'alamin (Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds).

Our bringing such names to remembrance is part of our Prayer and Praise. But we must not associate with people who use Allah's names profanely, or so as to suggest anything derogatory to His dignity or His unity.

Cf. 17:110.

...وَذَرُواْ الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أسْمَآئِهِ...

but shun such men as use profanity in His names:

سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٨٠)...

for what they do, they will soon be requited.

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ (١٨١)

181. Of those We have created are people who direct (others) with truth, and dispense justice therewith.

Section 23

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُم مِّنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٢)

182. Those who reject Our signs, We shall gradually visit with punishment, in ways they perceive not.

C1154a. See also 68:44 and n. 5626.

وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ (١٨٣)

183. Respite will I grant unto them:

for My scheme is strong (and unfailing).

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِهِم مِّن جِنَّةٍ...

184. Do they not reflect?

Their companion is not seized with madness:

C1155. Their companion, i.e., the Holy Prophet, who lived with and amongst them. He was accused of madness because he behaved differently from them.

- He had no selfish ambitions;
- he was always true, in thought, word, and deed:
- he was kind and considerate to the weak, and was not dazzled by worldly power or wealth or position:
- he was undeterred by fear of the strong, the mockery of the cynics, the bitterness of the evil, or the indifference of the heedless.

That is why he stood out boldly against wrong: he did not mince his words, and his warnings were not mealy-mouthed.

...إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٨٤)

he is but a perspicuous warner.

C1156. Mubin; perspicuous.

The reason why I have not used a simpler word, such as "plain" or "clear" is explained in n. 716 to 5:15.

Al-Mustafa's sermons were not polite reminders, with an eye to the flattery of weaknesses in high places or national vanities or crowd passions. They brought out every foible into the glare of light, by a fiery eloquence fed by inspiration from Allah.

أَوَلَمْ يَنظُرُواْ فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ...

185. Do they see nothing in the government of the heavens and the earth and all that Allah hath created?

C1157. An appeal to Allah's most wonderful universe should at once convince a thinking mind of man's nothingness, and Allah's power, glory, and goodness.

Man's term here is fleeting. If he is not warned by the great Signs, and the Messages which call his attention to them, is he capable of any faith at all?

...وَأَنْ عَسَى أَن يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ ...

(Do they not see) that it may well be that their term is nigh drawing to an end?

...فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٨٥)

In what message after this will they then believe?

مَن يُضْلِلِ اللّهُ فَلاَ هَادِيَ لَهُ...

186. To such as Allah rejects from His guidance, there can be no guide;

...وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (١٨٦)

He will leave them in their trespasses, wandering in distraction.

C1158. Cf. 2:15.

If Allah's light is removed, the best of them can only wander hither and thither, like blind men, in distraction.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا...

187. They ask thee about the (final) hour, when will be its appointed time?

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِندَ رَبِّي لاَ يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلاَّ هُوَ...

Say:

"The knowledge thereof is with my Lord (alone): none but He can reveal as to when it will occur.

C1159. The fact of its coming is a certainty: the exact time appointed for it is not revealed by Allah. If it were it would be so momentous as to disturb our thoughts and life. It would be a heavy burden to us. Our duty is to be prepared for it at all times.

It will come when we least expect it. In the present Gospels Jesus says the same thing: he does not know the Hour, but it will come suddenly.

> "But of that day and that Hour knoweth no man, no, not the angles which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." (Mark. 13:32-33).

...ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ لاَ تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلاَّ بَغْتَةً ...

Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth.

Only, all of a sudden, will it come to you.

...يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا...

They ask thee as if thou wert eager in search thereof:

C1160. Hafiyy is usually construed to mean; "eager or anxious in search of":

the preposition following here is 'an = concerning, about.

Some commentators (including Raghib) understand it in this passage to mean "well-acquainted."

In 19:47, with the preposition *bi* following it, it signifies "well-disposed to", favourable to, good to, kind to."

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِندَ اللّهِ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٨٧)

Say: "The knowledge thereof is with Allah (alone), but most men know not."

...قُل لاَّ أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلاَ ضَرًّا إِلاَّ مَا شَاء اللّهُ

188. Say:

"I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as Allah willeth.

...وَلَوْ كُنتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لاَسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ

If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me,

...إِنْ أَنَاْ إِلاَّ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٨٨)

I am but a warner, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith."

C1161. A warner to all, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith, because they will profit by the glad tidings.

As every one is invited to faith, the glad tidings are offered to all, but they are not necessarily accepted by all.

Section 24

...هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

189. It is He who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love).

C1162. Cf. 4:1, and n. 504, where the construction is explained.

...فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلاً خَفِيفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ...

When they are united, she bears a light burden and carries it about (unnoticed).

...فَلَمَّا أَثْقَلَت دَّعَوَا اللّهَ رَبَّهُمَا ...

When she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah their Lord, (saying):

C1163. The mystery of the physical birth of man, as it affects the father and the mother, only touches the imagination of the parents in the later stages when the child is yet unborn and yet the life stirs within the body of the expectant mother.

The coming of the new life is a solemn thing, and is fraught with much hope as well as much unknown risk to the mother herself.

The parents in their anxiety turn to Allah. If this feeling of solemnity, hope, and looking towards Allah were maintained after birth, all would be well for the parents as well as for the rising generation. But the attitude changes, as the verses following show.

... لَئِنْ آتَيْتَنَا صَالِحاً لَّنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (١٨٩)

"If Thou givest us a goodly child, we vow we shall (ever) be grateful."

C1164. Goodly: salih: includes the following ideas:

- sound in body and mind;
- healthy;
- righteous;
- of good moral disposition.

...فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمَا صَالِحاً جَعَلاَ لَهُ شُرَكَاء فِيمَا آتَاهُمَا

190. But when He giveth them a goodly child, they ascribe to others a share in the gift they have received:

C1165. When the child is born, the parents forget that it is a precious gift of Allah, -a miracle of Creation, which should lift their minds up to the higher things of Allah.

Instead their gradual familiarity with the new life makes them connect it with many superstitious ideas or rites and ceremonies, or they take it as a matter of course, is a little plaything of the material world. This leads to idolatry or false worship, or the selling up of false standards, in derogation of the dignity of Allah.

...فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (١٩٠)

but Allah is exalted, high above the partners they ascribe to Him.

أَيُشْرِكُونَ مَا لاَ يَخْلُقُ شَيْئاً وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ (١٩١)

191. Do they indeed ascribe to Him as partners things that can create nothing, but are themselves created?

وَلاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَلاَ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَنصُرُونَ (١٩٢)

192. No aid can they give them, nor can they aid themselves!

وَإِن تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لاَ يَتَّبِعُوكُمْ...

193. If ye call them to guidance, they will not obey:

...سَوَاء عَلَيْكُمْ أَدَعَوْتُمُوهُمْ أَمْ أَنتُمْ صَامِتُونَ (١٩٣)

for you it is the same whether ye call them or ye hold your peace!

C1166. When false worship takes root, the teacher of Truth finds much to discourage him. As far as he is concerned, it seems as if he has produced no effect. Yet his duty is to continue his work, in the spirit of verse 199 below, forgiving all opposition, teaching what is right, and not joining the ignorant in their attitude of doubt and indecision.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ...

194. Verily those whom ye call upon besides Allah are servants like unto you:

C1167. False gods, whether idols or deified men, or ideas and superstitions, have no existence of their own, independent of Allah's creation. They are Allah's creatures, and like servants are subject to His authority.

Deified men are not real men, but false ideas of men. They cannot help themselves: how can they help others?

...فَادْعُوهُمْ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٩٤)

call upon them, and let them listen to your prayer, if ye are (indeed) truthful!

...أَلَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ يَمْشُونَ بِهَا

195. Have they feet to walk with?

...أَمْ لَهُمْ أَيْدٍ يَبْطِشُونَ بِهَا

or hands to lay hold with?

...أَمْ لَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا... ...

or eyes to see with?

...أَمْ لَهُمْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

or ears to hear with?

...قُلِ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ كِيدُونِ فَلاَ تُنظِرُونِ (١٩٥)

Say: "Call your god-partners, scheme (your worst) against me, and give me no respite!

C1168. Here is a test and a challenge. If the false gods had any power or even existence, collect them all together, and, says the Prophet of Allah. "Let them do their worst against me."

They cannot: because the whole thing is based on a superstition and a chimera.

إِنَّ وَلِيِّيَ اللّهُ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ (١٩٦)

196. "For my protector is Allah, Who revealed the Book (from time to time), and He will choose and befriend the righteous.

...وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ لاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَكُمْ

197. "But those ye call upon besides Him, are unable to help you,

...وَلاَ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ (١٩٧)

and indeed to help themselves."

وَإِن تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لاَ يَسْمَعُواْ...

198. If thou callest them to guidance, they hear not.

...وَتَرَاهُمْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٩٨)

Thou wilt see them looking at thee, but they see not.

C1169. The beauty and righteousness of Al-Mustafa's life were acknowledged on all hands, until he received the mission to preach and to fight against evil.

What happened then?

Evil erected barricades for itself. It had eyes, but it refused to see. It had ears, but it refused to hear. It had intelligence, but it blocked up its channels of understanding.

Even now, after Fourteen Centuries, a life of unexampled purity, probity, justice, and righteousness is seen in false lights by blind detractors!

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ (١٩٩)

199. Hold to forgiveness;

command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant.

C1170. Allah comforts the Prophet and directs his mind to three precepts:

1. to forgive injuries, insults, and persecution;
2. to continue to declare the faith that was in him, and not only to declare it, but to act up to it in all his dealings with friends and foes;
3. to pay no attention to ignorant fools, who raised doubts or difficulties, hurled taunts or reproaches, or devised plots to defeat the truth:

   they were to be ignored and passed by, not to be engaged in fights and fruitless controversies, or conciliated by compromises.

وَإِمَّا يَنزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّهِ...

200. If a suggestion from Satan assail thy (mind), seek refuge with Allah;

C1171. Even a Prophet of Allah is but human. He might think that revenge or retaliation, or a little tactful silence when evil stalks abroad, or some compromise with ignorance, might be best for the cause.

He is to reject such suggestions.

...إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٠٠)

for He heareth and knoweth (all things).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ (٢٠١)

201. Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance when lo! they see (aright)!

C1172. Allah protects His own, as no one else can. He is the sure refuge -and the only one- for men of faith.

If we are confused or angry, being blinded by this world, He will open our eyes.

وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّونَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ لَا يُقْصِرُونَ (٢٠٢)

202. But their brethren (the evil ones) plunge them deeper into error, and never relax (their efforts).

C1173. We go back to consider the ungodly, whom we left at verse 198, in order to be taught our behaviour towards evil.

The forces of evil never relax their efforts to draw their "brethren" (those who go into their family) deeper and deeper into the mire of sin and destruction.

وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِم بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا...

203. If thou bring them not a revelation, they say: "Why hast thou not got it together?"

C1174. "Ayah" here, I think, means specially an Ayah of the Holy Quran.

The infidels did not believe in revelation, and used to taunt the Holy Prophet, as much as to say that he used to put together words and promulgate them as revelation. The answer is contained in the sentence that follows.

No human composition could contain the beauty, power, and spiritual insight of the Quran. Without inspiration it is impossible to suppose that a man, with or without literary and philosophic training could produce such a book as the Quran.

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَّبِعُ مَا يوحَى إِلَيَّ مِن رَّبِّي ...

Say: "I but follow what is revealed to me from my Lord:

...هَـٰذَا بَصَآئِرُ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

This is (nothing but) lights from your Lord,

C1175. "Lights": eyes, faculty of spiritual insight.

The revelation is for us

1. spiritual eyes,
2. guidance, and
3. mercy,

- 1 is the highest in degree:

  just as a blind man, if he is given eyes and the faculty of sight, is at once removed into an entirely new world, so those who can reach the stage of spiritual insight pass into and become citizens of a wholly new spiritual World,

- 2 is next in degree;

  the man of the world can act up to the teaching about right conduct and prepare for the Hereafter,

- 3 is the Mercy of Allah, free to every one, saint and sinner, who sincerely believes and puts his trust in Allah.

...وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٠٣)

and guidance, and mercy, for any who have faith.

وَإِذَا قُرِىءَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا۟ لَهُۥ وَأَنصِتُوا۟ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٢٠٤)

204. When the Qur'án is read, listen to it with attention, and hold your peace:

that ye may receive Mercy.

وَاذْكُر رَّبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعاً وَخِيفَةً...

205. And do thou (O reader!) bring thy Lord to remembrance in thy (very) soul, with humility and in reverence,

...وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالآصَالِ...

without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings;

...وَلاَ تَكُن مِّنَ الْغَافِلِينَ (٢٠٥)

and be not thou of those who are unheedful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ عِندَ رَبِّكَ لاَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ...

206. Those who are near to thy Lord, disdain not to do him worship:

C1176. The higher you are in spiritual attainment, the more is your desire and your opportunity to serve and worship your Lord and Cherisher and the Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds: and the greater is your pride in that service and that worship.

...وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ يَسْجُدُونَ (٢٠٦)

they celebrate His praises, and bow down before Him.

C1177. At this stage a Sajdah or prostration is indicated, as a sign of our humble acceptance of the privilege of serving and worshipping Allah, - a fitting close to Surah in which we are led, through a contemplation of the stories of the Messengers of Allah, to the meaning of revelation and its relation to our moral and spiritual progress.



The Absolute Reality

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ

And obey Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad, peace be upon him), if you are believers.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Anfal

الأنفال

Introduction and Summary

In the previous Introductions to Surahs we have shown how each Surah is a step or gradation in the teaching of the Quran. The first seven Surahs, comprising a little less than one-third of the Quran, form a gradation, sketching the early spiritual history of man and leading up to the formation of the new Ummah or Community of the Holy Messenger. Now we begin another gradation, consolidation that Ummah and directing us as to various phases in our new collective life.

In this chapter we have the lessons of the Battle of Badr enforced in their larger aspects;

1. the question of war booty;
2. the true virtues necessary for fighting the good fight;
3. victory against odds;
4. clemency and consideration for one's own and for others in the hour of victory.

As regards booty taken in battle,

- the first point to note is that that should never be our aim in war. It is only an adventitious circumstances, a sort of windfall.

- Secondly, no soldier or troop has any inherent right to it. A righteous war is a community affair, and any accessions resulting from it belong to Allah, or the community or Cause.

- Thirdly, certain equitable principles of division should be laid down to check human greed and selfishness.

  A fifth share goes to the Commander, and he can use it at his discretion; for his own expenses, and for the relief of the poor and suffering, and the orphans and widows (8:41).

  The remainder was divided, according to the Prophet's practice, not only among those who were actually in the fight physically, but all who were in the enterprise, young and old, provided they loyally did some duty assigned to them.

- Fourthly, there should be no disputes, as they interfere with internal discipline and harmony.

These principles are followed in the best modern practice of civilized nations. All acquisitions of war belong absolutely to the Sovereign as representing the commonwealth. In the distribution of booty not only the actual captors but also the "joint captors" and the "constructive captors" share. See Sir R. Phillimore's International Law (1885), vol, 3, pp. 209-10, 221-24.

As regards the military virtues, which are the types of virtuous throughout life, we are shown by an analysis of the incidents of Badr how against the greatest odds, Allah's help will give victory if men are fighting not for themselves but for the sacred Cause

of Allah. And directions are given for the treatment of prisoners and for maintaining the solidarity of the Muslim community.

The date of this Surah is shortly after the battle of Badr, which was fought on Friday, the 17th of Ramadan in the second year of the Hijrah. A short account of the battle is given in n. 352 to 3:13.

Summary- All booty is really at the disposal of Allah's Messenger under directions from Allah. Men of faith accept and obey these directions with cheerfulness. Victory and the prize of victory come from Allah, as was proved at Badr (8:1-19, and C.89).

Obedience and intelligent discipline, zeal, faith, and gratitude to Allah, are the true passports to success and protection from the assaults of evil. Evil will be piled up with evil and destroyed (8:20-37, and C.90).

The battle of Badr was a testing time, and showed how virtue and valour can conquer against odds. Steadfastness and obedience; faith, courage, and fearlessness; due preparation and free expenditure of resources and energy-these expected from you by Allah, and His help is all-sufficient (8:38-64, and C.91).

Even tenfold odds against you do not count if you are fighting for truth and faith against enemies of truth and faith; but remember clemency and consideration in the hour of victory (8:65-75, and C.92).

C.89 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:1-19)

Fight the good fight, but dispute not
About the prize: that is for Allah
To give. Men of faith act and obey.
'Tis nobler to fight for Truth
Than to seek worldly grain.

To the pure in faith Allah will give
The mind and the resources to conquer.
They but fight, with no thought
Of ever turning back; the victory
Should be ascribed to Allah, not men.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الأنفَالِ...

1. They ask thee concerning (things taken as) spoils of war.

C1178. The occasion was the question of the division of the booty after the battle of Badr- See Introduction to this Surah.

...قُلِ الأنفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ...

Say:

"(such) spoils are at the disposal of Allah and the Messenger:

C1179. Booty taken in a lawful and just war. It belongs to the Cause, in this case the Cause of Allah, as administered by His Messenger. The chief thing is to remain staunch to the Cause of Allah, and have no differences among those who stand for the Cause.

Our internal relations must be kept straight: they must not be disturbed by cupidity or worldly considerations of gain, for any windfalls of this kind should be outside our calculations.

...فَاتَّقُواْ اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُواْ ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ...

so fear Allah, and keep straight the relations between yourselves:

...وَأَطِيعُواْ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١)

obey Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe."

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

2. For, believers are those who,

- when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts,

...وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا...

- and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened,

...وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٢)

- and put (all) their trust in their Lord.

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (٣)

3. - Who establish regular prayers

- and spend (freely) out of the gifts We have given them for sustenance:

أُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا...

4. Such in truth are the believers:

...لَّهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٤)

they have grades of dignity with their Lord, and forgiveness, and generous sustenance.

C1180. Sustenance: again in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. The object is to warn off from the love of booty and worldly wealth.

Why do we want these?

To all true Believers Allah gives generous sustenance in any case, in both senses, but especially in the spiritual sense, for it is coupled with forgiveness and grades of dignity before Allah' in the next verse.

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ (٥)

5. Just as thy Lord ordered thee out of thy house in truth even though a party among the believers disliked it.

C1181. Just as: the comparison takes us back to the first clause in verse 4: "such in truth are the Believers"-

just as thy Lord also is just and true in ordering thee out to fight against heavy odds, when the alternative was to fight against the unarmed caravan which would have given thee abundant booty almost without a fight.

To appreciate the full meaning, remember that the word **haqq**, translated "truth" means also "right ... .. just", "what is becoming."

The true Believers believe in truth and do right in obedience to Allah's command. So Allah also, in asking them to fight against odds, is not asking them to rush to destruction, but is providing them with an opportunity of vindicating the truth in scorn of worldly advantage. And He made good His promise by giving them victory.

يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَمَا تَبَيَّنَ...

6. Disputing with thee concerning the truth after it was made manifest,

كَأَنَّمَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنظُرُونَ (٦)...

as if they were being driven to death and they (actually) saw it.

C1182. In verse 6 we have again the word **"truth":** some of the Believers disputed concerning **"the truth":** they did not feel sure that the course recommended was the right course.

They thought it would be certain destruction: they saw death almost staring them in the face.

وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ ...

7. Behold! Allah promised you one of the two (enemy) parties, that it should be yours:

C1183. Just before Badr there were two alternatives before the Muslims in Madinah to save themselves from being overwhelmed by the Makkan Quraish with all their resources from the rich Syrian trade.

- One, which had least danger for the time being, and also promised much booty, was to fall upon the

Quraish caravan returning from Syria to Makkah richly laden, and led by Abu Sufyan with only 40 men unarmed. From a worldly point of view this was the safest and most lucrative course.

- The other alternative, was to leave the booty out boldly against the well-armed and well-equipped Quraish army of 1,000 men coming from Makkah.

The Muslims had no more than 300 men, ill-armed, to oppose this force. But if they could defeat it, it would shake the selfish autocracy which was in possession of Makkah.

By Allah's help they won a splendid victory, and the standard of Truth was established, never to be lowered again.

...وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ...

ye wished that the one unarmed should be yours,

...وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَن يُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧)

but Allah willed to justify the truth according to His words, and to cut off the roots of the unbelievers.

لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٨)

8. That He might justify and prove falsehood false, distasteful though it be to those in guilt.

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ...

9. Remember ye implored the assistance of your Lord, and He answered you:

...أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُم بِأَلْفٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَآئِكَةِ مُرْدِفِينَ (٩)

"I will assist you with a thousand of the angels, ranks on ranks."

C1184. Cf. 3:123, 125, 126.

The number of angels, a thousand at Badr and three thousand and five thousand at Uhud, is equal to the strength of the enemy.

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّهُ إِلاَّ بُشْرَى وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ...

10. Allah made it but a message of hope, and an assurance to your heart:

...وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلاَّ مِنْ عِندِ اللّهِ...

(in any case) there is no help except from Allah:

C1185. All help comes ultimately from Allah. In special cases it may take special forms to put heart into us, and to fit in with our feelings and our psychology.

...إِنَّ اللّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٠)

and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

Section 2

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النُّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ ...

11. Remember He covered you with a sort of drowsiness, to give you calm as from Himself,

C1186. Cf. 3:154 for Uhud.

Calm (presence of mind) is essential in battle and in all posts of danger. If the mind is too much in a state of excitement, it cannot carry out a well-considered or well-concerted plan. This spirit of calm confidence on the part of tile Muslims won against the blustering violence of the Quraysh.

... وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُم مِّن السَّمَاء مَاء...

and He caused rain to descend on you from heaven,

C1187. The rain was welcome for many reasons.

- Water was scarce both for drinking and ablutions;
- the Muslim band, without baggage or equipment or comforts, found that their thirst aggravated their fatigue;
- the sand was loose, and the rain consolidated it and enabled them "to plant their feet firmly."

...لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ...

- to clean you therewith,
- to remove from you the stain of Satan,

C1188. "Stain of Satan": Dirt is physically a symbol of evil, and the Muslims were particular about ablutions before prayer. But the rain also refreshed their spirits and removed any lurking doubts in their minds (suggestions of the Evil) that victory might be impossible in such adverse circumstances.

...وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الأَقْدَامَ (١١)

- to strengthen your hearts, and
- to plant your feet firmly therewith.

...إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلآئِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُواْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ

12. Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message):

"I am with you: give firmness to the believers:

...سَأُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ الرَّعْبَ

I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers:

...فَاضْرِبُواْ فَوْقَ الأَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُواْ مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ (١٢)

smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them."

C1189. The vulnerable parts of an armed man are above the neck. A blow on the neck, face or head, finishes him off.

If he has armour it is difficult to get at his heart. But if his hands are put out of action, he is unable to wield his sword or lance or other weapon, and easily becomes a prisoner.

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّواْ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ

13. This because they contended against Allah and His Messenger:

... وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (١٣)

if any contend against Allah and His Messenger, Allah is strict in punishment.

ذَٰلِكُمْ فَذُوقُوهُ...

14. Thus (will it be said):

"Taste ye then of the (punishment):

...وَأَنَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٤)

for those who resist Allah, is the penalty of the fire."

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

15. O ye who believe!

...إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ الْأَدْبَارَ (١٥)

when ye meet the unbelievers in hostile array, never turn your backs to them.

C1190. The laws of Jihad are exactly similar to those enforced by military virtue and discipline. Meet your enemy fairly and squarely, not rashly, but after due preparation.

Zahfan in the text (meeting in hostile array) implies a slow and well-planned proceeding towards a hostile army. When once in combat, carry it through: there is no room for second thoughts.

Death or victory should be the motto of every soldier: it may be death for himself individually, but if he has faith, there is triumph in either case for his cause.

Two exceptions are recognised:

- reculer pour mieux sauter, to go back in order to jump forward; or

  to deceive the enemy by a feint;

- if an individual or body is, by the chances of battle, isolated from his own force, he can fall back on his force in order to fight the battle.

  There is no virtue in mere single-handedness. Each individual must use his life and his resources to the best advantage for the common cause.

وَمَن يُوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُ إِلاَّ مُتَحَرِّفاً لِّقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزاً إِلَى فِئَةٍ...

16. If any do turn his back to them on such a day

unless it be in a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a troop (of his own)

...فَقَدْ بَاء بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ...

He draws on himself the wrath of Allah, and his abode is Hell,

...وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٦)

and evil refuge (indeed)!

...فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ...

17. It is not ye who slew them;

it was Allah:

...وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ رَمَى...

when thou threwest (a handful of dust), it was not thy act, but Allah's:

C1191. When the battle began, the Holy Prophet prayed, and threw a handful of dust or sand at the enemy, which, as described in traditions, struck the eyes of the enemy.

This had a great psychological effect. Every act in the battle is ascribed to Allah, a it was in His cause and it was not undertaken except by His command. (R).

...وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلاء حَسَناً...

in order that He might test the believers by a gracious trial from Himself:

C1192. Numerically the odds against the Muslims were three to one. In other ways they were at a disadvantage: of arms and equipment they had but little, while the enemy were well-found: they were inexperienced, while the Quraish had brought their foremost warriors.

In all this there was a test, but the test was accompanied by gracious favours of countless value:

- their Commander was one in whom they had perfect faith, and for whom they were ready to lay down their lives;
- the rain refreshed them;
- their spirit was unshaken; and
- they were fighting in Allah's cause.

Thus the trial or test became itself a blessing.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٧)

for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth (all things).

ذَٰلِكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُوهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٨)

18. That, and also because Allah is He who makes feeble the plans and stratagems of the unbelievers.

إِن تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ وَإِن تَنتَهُوا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ...

19. (O unbelievers!) if ye prayed for victory and judgment, now hath the judgment come to you:

C1193. Fath: victory, decision, judgment.

The Quraish in Makkah had prayed for victory: they were confident that their superior numbers, equipment, and experience would be decisive.

With a play on the word, they are told that the decision had come, and the victory-but not in the sense they had hoped for!

if ye desist (from wrong), it will be best for you:

...وَإِن تَعُودُوا نَعُدْ ...

if ye return (to the attack) so shall We.

...وَلَن تُغْنِيَ عَنكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ...

Not the least good will your forces be to you even if they were multiplied:

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٩)

for verily Allah is with those who believe.

C.90 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:20-37)

Be ready to obey Allah's call, and to hold
All else as naught: He will give you
The light, turn away all evil from you,
And forgive you your sins and shortcomings.
Ever keep in remembrance His mercies and grace.
The godless may try to keep men
From Allah, but they will not thrive:
They will be hurled together to destruction.

Section 3

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

20. O ye who believe!
obey Allah and His Messenger,

...وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ (٢٠)

and turn not away from him when ye hear (him speak).

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (٢١)

21. Nor be like those who say,
"We hear," but listen not:

C1194. Cf. 2:93.

... إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِندَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ

22. For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are the deaf and the dumb,

C1195. Cf. 2:18.

... الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٢٢)

those who understand not.

وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّأَسْمَعَهُمْ...

23. If Allah had found in them any good, He would indeed have made them listen;

...وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّواْ وَّهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ (٢٣)

(as it is), if He had made them listen, they would but have turned back and declined (faith).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اسْتَجِيبُواْ لِلّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُم لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ...

24. O ye who believe!

give your response to Allah and His Messenger, when He calleth you to that which will give you life;

C1196. There are two points to note.

1. Note that after Allah and His Messenger are mentioned, the pronoun and verb in the next clause are singular:

   everything that Allah's Messenger put forward as an injunction came by inspiration from Allah:

   the Messenger made his will coincide completely with Allah's will.

2. We are asked actively to give our response in deed and life to the call of duty and conscience, for that call leads to real life, the life eternal, even though it may apparently mean in this world the loss of things that make life dear or the loss of life itself.

   If we refer this to Jihad, i.e., fighting in and for the Cause, both literally and metaphorically, the meaning becomes quite clear.

...وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ...

and know that Allah cometh in between a man and his heart,

C1197. If the human heart is refractory and refuses to obey the call of Allah, that is not the end of the matter. Allah has to be reckoned with. The refusal may be because there was some pet human scheme which the heart of man was not willing to give up for Allah's Cause.

Will that scheme come to fruition by refusing to serve the higher Cause?

By no means. Man proposes, but God disposes.

If the scheme or motive was perfectly secret from men, it was not secret from Allah. The heart is the innermost seat of man's affections and desires: but Allah intervenes between man and his heart. (R).

...وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢٤)

and that it is He to whom ye shall (all) be gathered.

...وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لاَّ تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنكُمْ خَآصَّةً

25. And fear tumult or oppression, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong

C1198. Fitnah: has many meanings:

- the root meaning is trial or temptation, as in 2:102 and 8: 28;
- an analogous meaning is trial or punishment, as in 5:71;
- tumult or oppression, as in 2:193, and here: and in 8:39,
- there is here (8:25) the further shade of meaning suggested, discord, sedition, civil war.

This warning against internal discord or tumult was very necessary in the Civil Wars of early Islam, and was never more necessary than it is now. For it affects innocent and guilty alike.

...وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢٥)

and know that Allah is strict in punishment.

...وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ

26. Call to mind when ye were a small (band), despised through the land,

... تَخَافُونَ أن يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ ...

and afraid that men might despoil and kidnap you;

C1199. On the immediate occasion the Muslims were reminded that;

- they were a small band in Makkah despised and rejected;
- living in a state of insecurity for their persons,
- their lives, their property,

and those of their dependants, persecuted and exiled and how by the grace of Allah they found a safe asylum in Madinah;

- how they found friends and helpers,
- how their many needs were cared for, and
- how at length they gathered strength and numbers enough to defeat the forces of godlessness, injustice, and oppression.

But for every individual, in some form or other, the lesson applies. His spiritual life begins humbly; he is despised and laughed at, perhaps persecuted and shut out from ordinary privileges open to all; but Allah gives him strength; friends spring up for him; and he is sustained until his highest spiritual desires are gradually fulfilled.

... فَآوَاكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُم بِنَصْرِهِ ...

but He provided a safe asylum for you, strengthened you with his aid,

...وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٢٦)

and gave you good things for sustenance: that ye might be grateful.

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَخُونُواْ اللّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ...

27. O ye that believe!

betray not the trust of Allah and the Messenger,

...وَتَخُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٧)

nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.

C1200. Trusts may be of various kinds:

- property, goods, credit, etc.;
- plans, confidences, secrets, etc;
- knowledge, talents, opportunities, etc,

which we are expected to use for our fellowmen.

Men may betray the trust of Allah and His Prophet by misusing property, or abusing the confidence reposed in them, or the knowledge or talents given to them. On that special occasion, when the plans for the protection of Allah's worshippers against annihilation were of special importance, the Prophet's trust and confidence had to be guarded with special care.

Occasions for scrupulously respecting the trust and confidence of our fellow-men occur every day in our life, and few of us can claim perfection in this respect. Hence the special distinction of the Prophet of Allah, who earned the title of Al-Amin, the one who was true to every trust reposed in him.

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ...

28. And know ye that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial;

C1201. A big family-many sons-was considered a source of power and strength: 3:10, 116.

So in English, a man with many children is said to have his "quiver full":

Cf. Psalms, 127:4-5:

"As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so are the children of thy youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

So with property and possessions: they add to a man's dignity, power, and influence. But both possessions and

a large family are a temptation and a trial. They may turn out to be a source of spiritual downfall, if they are mishandled, or if the love of them excludes the love of Allah.

...وَأَنَّ اللّهَ عِندَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢٨)

and that it is Allah with whom lies your highest reward.

Section 4

...يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ إِن تَتَّقُواْ اللّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَاناً

29. O ye who believe!

if ye fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong),

C1202. Cf. 2:53 and 2:185.

The battle of Badr is called the Furqan in Muslim theology, because it was the first trial of strength by battle, in Islam, between the powers of good and evil. Evil was defeated, and those who had real faith were tested and sorted out from those who had not faith enough to follow the banner of Faith.

See also 8:41 and n. 1210.

...وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ

remove from you (all) evil (that may afflict) you,

and forgive you:

...وَاللّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٩)

for Allah is the Lord of grace unbounded.

...وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ

30. Remember how the unbelievers plotted against thee,

to keep thee in bonds,

or slay thee,

or get thee out (of thy home).

C1203. The plots against Al-Mustafa in Makkah aimed at three things. They were not only foiled, but Allah's wonderful working turned the tables, and brought good out of evil in each case.

- They tried to hold the Prophet in subjection in Makkah by putting pressure on his uncles, relatives, and friends. But the more they persecuted, the more the little Muslim community grew in faith and numbers.
- They tried to injure or slay him. But the wonderful example of his humility, perseverance, and fearlessness furthered the cause of Islam.
- They tried to get him and his followers out of their homes. But they found a new home in Madinah from which they eventually re-conquered not only Makkah but Arabia and the world.

...وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللّهُ...

They plot and plan, and Allah too plans,

...وَاللّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ (٣٠)

but the best of planners is Allah.

C1203a. Cf. 3:54.

...وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا قَالُواْ قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَاء لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هَـذَا

31. When Our signs are rehearsed to them, they say:
"We have heard this (before):
if we wished, we could say (words) like these:

...إِنْ هَـذَا إِلاَّ أَسَاطِيرُ الأَوَّلِينَ (٣١)

these are nothing but tales of the ancients."

C1204. Cf. 6:25.

...وَإِذْ قَالُواْ اللَّهُمَّ إِن كَانَ هَـذَا هُوَ الْحَقَّ مِنْ عِندِكَ

32. Remember how they said:

"O Allah! if this is indeed the truth from Thee,

...فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ أوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٣٢)

rain down on us a shower of stones from the sky,

or send us a grievous penalty."

C1205. This was actually a challenge thrown out by the Infidels in Makkah not seriously but as a taunt. The answer is in the two following verses.

Allah punishes in His own good time, not according to the foolish and frivolous taunts of the Unbelievers. While the Holy Prophet was with them, he -the Mercy of the Worlds- conferred a certain amount of immunity to them. There were also other Muslims, just men who asked for forgiveness.

And Allah keeps the door of repentance and forgiveness open to all as long as they make it possible. But let them not be puffed up with pride, or think that they have lasting immunity.

What became of Abu Jahl? He and some of his greatest warriors were slain at Badr. The little autocratic clique that prevented Muslims from access to the Sacred Mosque had their punishment not long afterwards. They pretended to be its guardians.

But were they? Could they be?

Only the righteous could be true guardians to Allah's places of worship, and particularly to the Central House of the Ka'bah. It was to be a place of pure worship, while their idolatrous worship was mere mummery,- whistling and clapping of hands. All false worship advertises itself by noise and unseemly riot: it is said that the Pagans used to go naked round the Ka'bah.

وَمَا كَانَ اللّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنتَ فِيهِمْ...

33. But Allah was not going to send them a penalty whilst thou wast amongst them;

...وَمَا كَانَ اللّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ (٣٣)

nor was He going to send it whilst they could ask for pardon.

وَمَا لَهُمْ أَلاَّ يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُواْ أَوْلِيَاءهُ...

34. But what plea have they that Allah should not punish them, when they keep out (men) from the sacred Mosque -- and they are not its guardians?

...إِنْ أَوْلِيَآؤُهُ إِلاَّ الْمُتَّقُونَ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٤)

No men can be its guardians except the righteous;

but most of them do not understand.

وَمَا كَانَ صَلاَتُهُمْ عِندَ الْبَيْتِ إِلاَّ مُكَاء وَتَصْدِيَةً...

35. Their prayer at the house (of Allah) is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands:

...فَذُوقُواْ الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٣٥)

(its only answer can be), "Taste ye the penalty because ye blasphemed."

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

36. The unbelievers spend their wealth to hinder (men) from the path of Allah,

...فَسَيُنفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ...

and so will they continue to spend;

but in the end they will have (only) regrets and sighs;

at length they will be overcome:

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ (٣٦)

and the unbelievers will be gathered together to Hell.

لِيَمِيزَ اللّهُ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ...

37. In order that Allah may separate the impure from the pure,

C1206. It is only when matters are brought to an issue that evil is separated distinctly from the good. Then evil consorts with evil, and good with good.

The evil will be piled into a heap. When the cup is full, the punishment will come. There will be no mistake about it.

The good should not be discouraged, because in fighting against them, all forces of evil join together and pool their resources together. The more they do so, the easier is the final arbitrament. It is all in Allah's Plan.

... وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيثَ بَعْضَهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ...

put the impure, one on another,

...فَيَرْكُمَهُ جَمِيعاً فَيَجْعَلَهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ...

heap them together, and cast them into hell.

...أُولَـٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٣٧)

They will be the ones to have lost.

C.91 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:38-64)

The battle of Badr brought to an issue
The fight between Truth and Unbelief.
It was the Day of Differentiation.
Not for spoils was it won, nor by numbers;
But by courage and planning, union of wills,
And pooling of strength and resources-
Above all by the help of Allah,
Whose help is ever all-sufficient.

Section 5

قُل لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِن يَنتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُم مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ...

38. Say to the unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from unbelief), their past would be forgiven them;

...وَإِنْ يَعُودُواْ فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّةُ الأَوَّلِين (٣٨)

but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them).

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لاَ تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلّه...

39. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere;

C1207. Cf. 2:193 and n. 207.

...فَإِن انتَهَوْاْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٣٩)

but if they cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do.

C1208. If they cease from fighting and from the persecution of truth, Allah judges then by their actions and their motives, and would not wish that they should be harassed with further hostility.

But if they refuse all terms, the righteous have nothing to fear: Allah will help and protect them.

وَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ مَوْلاكُمْ...

40. If they refuse, be sure that Allah is your Protector --

...نِعْمَ الْمَوْلَى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ (٤٠)

the best to protect and the best to help.

وَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ...

41. And know that out of all the booty that ye may acquire (in war),

فَأَنَّ لِلّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ...

a fifth share is assigned

- to Allah, and
- to the Messenger, and
- to near relatives,
- orphans,
- the needy, and
- the wayfarer,

C1209. The rule is that a fifth share is set apart for the Imam (the Commander) and the rest is divided among the forces.

The fifth share reserved is expressed to be for Allah and the Prophet, and for charitable purposes for those to whom charity is due. Ultimately everything is at the disposal of Allah and His Prophet: 8:1: but four-fifths are divided, and only one-fifth is retained for the special purposes. The Imam has discretion as to the mode of division.

In the Prophet's life-time a certain portion was assigned to him and his near relatives.

...إِن كُنتُمْ آمَنتُمْ بِاللّهِ وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ

الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ...

if ye do believe in Allah and in the revelation We sent down to Our servant on the day of testing, the day of the meeting of the two forces.

C1210. Testing: Furqan: Criterion between right and wrong, decision between the forces of faith and unbelief.

The battle of Badr is called by this name. See 8:29 and n. 1202.

...وَاللّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٤١)

For Allah hath power over all things.

C1211. Allah's power is shown in the events detailed in the three verses following (verses 42-44), leading to the complete victory of the Muslims over the pagan Quraysh.

...إِذْ أَنتُم بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُم بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوَى وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ

42. Remember ye were on the hither side of the valley, and they on the farther side, and the caravan on lower ground than ye.

C1212. The little Islamic force from Madinah went out to meet the big Makkan army, and they met on the two sides of a valley at Badr, while the Quraish caravan was on lower ground towards the sea, about 3 miles from Badr.

...وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدتُّمْ لاَخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيعَادِ...

Even if ye had made a mutual appointment to meet, ye would certainly have failed in the appointment:

C1213. They were all at cross purposes. The caravan was making for Makkah, but scarcely thought it could get there. The Quraish force was trying to save the caravan and then annihilate the Muslims. The Muslims had decided to attack the Quraish army from Makkah which turned out to be big, more than three times their number.

Yet the two forces met, precisely at the spot and at the time when a decisive battle should take place and the Muslims dispose of the pretensions of the Makkans. If they had carefully planned a mutual appointment, they could not have carried it out more precisely.

On the Muslim side the few martyrs knew that the victory was theirs and those who survived the battle enjoyed the fruits of the victory. On the pagan side, both those who died and those who lived knew fully the issue joined. Even psychologically both sides went in with full determination to decide the issue.

...وَلَـكِن لِّيَقْضِيَ اللّهُ أَمْراً كَانَ مَفْعُولاً...

but (thus ye met), that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted;

...لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَى مَنْ حَيَّ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ...

that those who died might die after a clear sign (had been given),

and those who lived might live after a clear sign (had been given).

...وَإِنَّ اللّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٤٢)

And verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).

إِذْ يُرِيكَهُمُ اللّهُ فِي مَنَامِكَ قَلِيلاً...

43. Remember in thy dream Allah showed them to thee as few:

...وَلَوْ أَرَاكَهُمْ كَثِيرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الأَمْرِ وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ سَلَّمَ...

if He had shown them to thee as many, ye would surely have been discouraged, and ye would surely have disputed in (your) decision:

but Allah saved (you):

...إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٤٣)

for He knoweth well the (secrets) of (all) hearts.

وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذِ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلاً...

44. And remember when ye met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes,

...وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولاً...

and He made you appear as contemptible in their **eyes**: that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted:

C1214. The Muslim army though they knew their worldly disadvantage, did not realise the full odds against them. The Makkans came exulting in any case, and they despised the contemptible little force, opposed to them. Even though they thought the Muslim force was twice as great as it was (3:13), still that number was contemptible, when taken with its poor equipment.

Both these psychological mistakes subserved the main Plan, which was to bring the matter to a decisive issue, whether the Pagans of Makkah were to continue their arrogant oppression, or the religion of Allah was to be established in freedom and honour.

...وَإِلَى اللّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (٤٤)

for to Allah do all questions go back (for decision).

Section 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُواْ...

45. O ye who believe! when ye meet a force, be firm,

...وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٤٥)

and call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that ye may prosper.

...وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ

46. And obey Allah and His Messenger;

...وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ

and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart;

...وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٤٦)

and be patient and persevering:

for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

C1215. A fine description of the Muslim virtues which make for success and whose loss brings about humiliation and failure.

"Power": literally, "wind", -the favourable wind for a sailing ship.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِم بَطَرًا وَرِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن

سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

47. And be not like those who started from their homes insolently and to be seen of men, and to hinder (men) from the path of Allah:

C1216. A true description of the Makkan army which met its doom.

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (٤٧)

for Allah compasseth round about all that they do.

...وَإِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ

48. Remember Satan made their (sinful) acts seem alluring to them, and said:

...لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ

"No one among men can overcome you this day, while I am near to you":

...فَلَمَّا تَرَاءتِ الْفِئَتَانِ نَكَصَ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ وَقَالَ...

but when the two forces came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels, and said:

...إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَى مَا لاَ تَرَوْنَ إِنِّيَ أَخَافُ اللّهَ...

"Lo! I am clear of you;

lo! I see what ye see not;

lo! I fear Allah;

...وَاللّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٤٨)

for Allah is strict in punishment.

C1217. It is the way with the leaders of evil, when they find their cause lost, that they wash their hands of their followers and leave them in the lurch. They see more clearly than their dupes. They are not simpletons: they know the consequences of the wrath of Allah.

Satan's "fear" of Allah is terror combined with hatred, - the very opposite of the feeling which is described in Taqwa viz., the desire to avoid doing anything against Allah's will, such desire being founded on trust in Allah and the love of Allah.

Section 7

إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ ...

49. Lo! the hypocrites say, and those in whose hearts is a disease:

C1218. Cf. 2:10 for "disease in the heart."

Trust in Allah brings its own reward: our eyes are opened, and we see how great, good, and wise is the Cherisher of the Worlds. Others may sneer and despise. But the blessing of Allah keeps our minds fresh and our hearts contented.

... غَرَّ هَـؤُلاء دِينُهُمْ...

"These people, -- their religion has misled them."

...وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّهِ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٤٩)

But if any trust in Allah, behold! Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ الْمَلآئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ

وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ...

50. If thou couldst see, when the angels take the souls of the unbelievers (at death), (how) they smite their faces and their backs (saying):

C1219. In contrast to the taunt against those who trust in Allah, "that their religion has misled them," is shown the terrible punishment, after death, of those who laughed at Faith.

...وَذُوقُواْ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ (٥٠)

"Taste the penalty of the blazing fire.

... ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ

51. "Because of (the deeds) which your (own) hands sent forth:

C1220. The punishment is shown to be due to their own deeds of wrong, because Allah is never unjust to the least of His servants.

... وَأَنَّ اللّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلاَّمٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ (٥١)

for Allah is never unjust to His servants:

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

52. "(Deeds) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them:

...كَفَرُواْ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ...

they rejected the signs of Allah, and Allah punished them for their crimes:

...إِنَّ اللّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٥٢)

for Allah is strong, and strict in punishment:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ...

53. "Because Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls:

C1221. Allah bestows His grace freely, but He never withdraws it arbitrarily. Before He changes their state and circumstances, an actual state of rebellion and contumacy has arisen in their own souls, which brings about its inevitable punishment.

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٥٣)

and verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things)."

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ ...

54. "(Deeds) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and those before them":

they treated as false the signs of their Lord;

C1222. C1222. These words from the address of the angels are quoted again, in order to add the comment that follows.

Note that in verse 51, the words were that they rejected the Signs of Allah and were punished:

here the words are that they treated the Signs as false and were destroyed: -a higher degree of guilt deserved a severer punishment.

... فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَونَ...

so We destroyed them for their crimes, and We drowned the people of Pharaoh:

...وَكُلٌّ كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ (٥٤)

for they were all oppressors and wrongdoers.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِندَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٥)

55. For the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah are those who reject Him:

They will not believe.

C1223. In 8:22 we were warned against "the worst of beasts in the sight of Allah", who do not make use of their faculties of hearing, speaking and understanding, in the service of Allah, and in fact misuse their faculties to blaspheme Allah.

The same brute creatures are shone here in another light: they are faithless both to Allah and man.

الَّذِينَ عَاهَدتَّ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ...

56. They are those with whom thou didst make a Covenant, but they break their covenant every time

C1224. The immediate occasion was the repeated treachery of the Banu Quraiza after their treaties with the Muslims. But the general lesson remains, as noted in the two following verses.

Treachery in war is doubly wrong, for it endangers so many lives. Such treachery should be punished in such a way that it gets no chance again. Not only the actual perpetrators but those who follow their standard should be rendered powerless.

And the broken treaty should be denounced so that the innocent party can at least fight on equal terms.

From actual physical warfare we can carry the same lesson to spiritual warfare. A truce or understanding is possible with those who respect definite principles, not with those who have no principles and are merely out for oppression and wickedness.

وَهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ (٥٦)...

and they have not the fear (of Allah).

فَإِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِم مَّنْ خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (٥٧)

57. If ye gain the mastery over them in war, disperse, with them, those who follow them, that they may remember.

C1224a. The purpose of the verse is to urge Muslims to act against their enemies described above with a severity and resoluteness which would serve as a deterrent to other enemies of Islam who might be inclined to follow their example and act treacherously towards Muslims. (Eds.).

وَإِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِن قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاء...

58. If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms:

...إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُحِبُّ الخَائِنِينَ (٥٨)

for Allah loveth not the treacherous.

Section 8

وَلاَ يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ سَبَقُواْ إِنَّهُمْ لاَ يُعْجِزُونَ (٥٩)

59. Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly):

they will never frustrate (them).

...وَأَعِدُّواْ لَهُم مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن قُوَّةٍ وَمِن رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ...

60. Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war,

C1225. The immediate occasion of this injunction was the weakness of cavalry and appointments of war in the early fights of Islam. But the general meaning follows.

In every fight, physical, moral, or spiritual, arm yourself with the best weapons and the best arms against your enemy, so as to instill wholesome respect into him for you and the Cause you stand for.

...تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدْوَّ اللّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ...

to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of Allah and your enemies,

...وَآخَرِينَ مِن دُونِهِمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ...

and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know.

C1226. There are always lurking enemies whom you may not know, but whom Allah knows. It is your duty to be ready against all, for the sacred Cause under whose banner you are fighting.

...وَمَا تُنفِقُواْ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تُظْلَمُونَ (٦٠)

Whatever ye shall spend in the Cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you,

and ye shall not be treated unjustly.

C1227. Be always ready and put all your resources into your Cause. You do not do so in vain. Allah's reward will come in various forms. He knows all, and His reward will always be more generous than you can possibly deserve.

وَإِن جَنَحُواْ لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّهِ...

61. But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah:

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦١)

for He is the one that heareth and knoweth (all things).

C1228. While we must always be ready for the good fight lest it be forced on us, even in the midst of the fight we must always be ready for peace if there is any inclination towards peace on the other side.

There is no merit merely in a fight by itself. It should be a joyful duty not for itself, but to establish the reign of peace and righteousness and Allah's Law.

وَإِن يُرِيدُواْ أَن يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللّهُ...

62. Should they intend to deceive thee, verily Allah sufficeth thee:

...هُوَ الَّذِيَ أَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٢)

He it is that hath strengthened thee with his aid and with (the company of) the believers:

C1229. In working for peace there may be a certain risk of treachery on the other side. We must take that risk: because the men of Faith have Allah's aid to count upon and the strength of the united body of the righteous. (R).

وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ...

63. And (moreover) He hath put affection between their hearts:

...لَوْ أَنفَقْتَ مَا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً مَّا أَلَّفَتْ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ...

not if thou hadst spent all that is in the earth, couldst thou have produced that affection,

...وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٣)

but Allah hath done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise.

C1230. On the immediate occasion, the greatest miracle and most wonderful working of Allah's grace was the union of hearts produced among the jarring, war-like, excitable Clements of Arabia under the gentle, firm, and wise guidance of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah.

At all times we must pray to Allah for this gift above all, -union, understanding, and pure and sincere affection among those who take Allah's name. With it there is strength and success. Without it there is humiliation, slavery, and moral degradation.

There may be many causes of difference and dispute. The reconciliation can only come from the glory and wisdom of Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللّهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٤)

64. O Prophet! sufficient unto thee is Allah, (unto thee) and unto those who follow thee among the believers.

C1231. The Believers: mere lip-profession of belief, or even the kind of belief that does not result in action, is not enough.

To those whose belief is so sincere that it results in complete trust in Allah and in fearless action in His service, the consequences on this earth do not matter. Allah's good pleasure is enough for them.

C.92 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(8:65-75)

No man of heart, spirit, or constancy
Can ever be cowed down by odds
Against him. We fight not for spoils
Or for captives, but for the glory
Of Allah' and for truth and faith.
We must be kind to all, but especially
Regard the needs of our comrades,
Linked to us by ties of duty and affection.
Our highest reward will be forgiveness
And grace from the Giver of all.

Section 9

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ...

65. O Prophet!

rouse the believers to the fight.

...إِن يَكُن مِّنكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُواْ مِئَتَيْنِ...

If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred:

...وَإِن يَكُن مِّنكُم مِّئَةٌ يَغْلِبُواْ أَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ...

if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the unbelievers:

...بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لاَّ يَفْقَهُونَ (٦٥)

for these are a people without understanding.

C1232. In a fight, odds of ten to one against any one are appalling. But they do not daunt the men of faith. Whether they personally win or die, their Cause prevails. They are sure to win: because;

- they have divine aid, and

- even humanly speaking, those who take up arms against truth and righteousness are fools, and their seeming power is but a broken reed.

الآنَ خَفَّفَ اللّهُ عَنكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا...

66. For the present, Allah hath lightened your (task), for He knoweth that there is a weak spot in you:

C1233. Given equal conditions, Muslims on account of their faith could win against odds of ten to one. But where their organization and equipment are weak, as was the case about the time of Badr, they were set a lighter task, and asked to tackle no more than odds of two to one against them.

As a matter of fact at Badr they won through against odds of more than three to one.

...فَإِن يَكُن مِّنكُم مِّئَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُواْ مِئَتَيْنِ ...

but (even so), if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred,

...وَإِن يَكُن مِّنكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُواْ أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ...

and if a thousand, they will vanquish two thousand, with the leave of Allah:

...وَاللّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٦٦)

for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَن يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَى حَتَّى يُثْخِنَ فِي الأَرْضِ...

67. It is not fitting for an Prophet that he should have prisoners of war until he hath thoroughly subdued the land.

C1234. An ordinary war may be for territory or trade, revenge or military glory, -all "temporal goods of this world."

Such a war is condemned. But a Jihad is fought under strict conditions laid down by Islam, and solely for the cause of Allah. All baser motives, therefore are strictly

excluded. The greed of gain in the shape of ransom from captives has no place in such warfare. (R).

At the same time, if there has been heavy loss of life already, captives may be taken, and it would be for the Imam to exercise his discretion as to the time when it was safe to release them, and whether the release should be free or on parole or on a fine by way of punishment.

Destruction and slaughter, however repugnant to a gentle soul like that of Muhammad, were inevitable where evil tried to suppress the good. Even Jesus, whose mission was more limited, had to say: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword." (Matt. 10:34).

Seventy captives were taken at Badr, and it was decided to take ransom for them. While the general principle of fighting for the purpose of taking captives in order to get their ransom is condemned, the particular action in this case was approved in verses 68-71.

...تُرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللّهُ يُرِيدُ الآخِرَةَ...

Ye look for the temporal goods of this world;

but Allah looketh to the hereafter;

...وَاللّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٧)

and Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

لَّوْلاَ كِتَابٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيمَا أَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٨)

68. Had it not been for a previous ordainment from Allah, a severe penalty would have reached you for the (ransom) that ye took.

C1235. Though any motive of worldly gain, which may have been in the minds of some among the victorious Muslim army, is condemned as worthy of a severe penalty, what actually happened is ascribed to the Plan of Allah, which was preordained.

Among the prisoners taken were the Prophet's uncle 'Abbas and Hadhrat 'Ali's brother, Aqil, who afterwards became Muslims. 'Abbas was an ancestor of the founder

of the celebrated 'Abbasi Dynasty which played such a notable part in Islamic history. In his case the promise made in verse 70 was amply fulfilled.

In the case of all prisoners, if there was any good in their hearts, their very fight against Islam and their capture led to their being blessed with Islam. Thus does Allah's Plan work in a marvelous way, and evolve good out of seeming evil.

فَكُلُواْ مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ حَلاَلاً طَيِّبًا وَاتَّقُواْ اللّهَ...

69. But (now) enjoy what ye took in war, lawful and good:
but fear Allah:

C1236. Enjoy: literally, eat. See 7:19. n. 1004, and 5:66, n. 776.

...إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٦٩)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّمَن فِي أَيْدِيكُم مِّنَ الأَسْرَى...

70. O Prophet! say to those who are captives in your hands:

...إِن يَعْلَمِ اللّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّا أُخِذَ مِنكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ...

"If Allah findeth any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you:

C1237. This is a consolation to the prisoners of war. In spite of their previous hostility, Allah will forgive them in His mercy if there was any good in their hearts, and confer upon them a far higher gift than anything they have ever lost. This gift in its highest sense would be the blessing of Islam, but even in a material sense, there was great good fortune awaiting them, e.g., in the case of Abbas (see n. 1235).

Note how comprehensive is Allah's care. He encourages and strengthens the Muslims, at the same time condemning any baser motives that may have entered their minds, He consoles the prisoners of war and promises them better things if there is any good in them

at all. And He offers comfort to those who have left their homes in His Cause, and knits them into closer fellowship with those who have helped them and sympathized with them.

...وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٧٠)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

... وَإِن يُرِيدُوا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللَّهَ مِن قَبْلُ

71. But if they have treacherous designs against thee, (O Messenger!) they have already been in treason against Allah,

C1238. If the kindness shown to them is abused by the prisoners of war when they are released, it is not a matter for discouragement to those who showed the kindness. Such persons have in their treachery shown already their treason to Allah, in that they took up arms against Allah's Prophet, and sought to blot out the pure worship of Allah.

The punishment of defeat, which opened the eyes of some of their comrades, evidently did not open their eyes. But Allah knows all, and in His wisdom will order all things for the best. The Believers have done their duty in showing such clemency as they could in the circumstances of war. For them "Allah sufficeth" (8:62).

... فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ...

and so hath He given (thee) power over them

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٧١)

and Allah is He who hath (full) knowledge and wisdom.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

72. Those who believed, and adopted exile, and fought for the faith, with their property and their persons, in the Cause of Allah,

...وَالَّذِينَ آوَوا وَّنَصَرُوا أُولَـئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاء بَعْضٍ...

as well as those who gave (them) asylum and aid - these are (all) friends and protectors, one of another.

C1239. The reference is to the Muhajirin and the Ansar, the Emigrants and the Helpers, the people who forsook their homes and adopted voluntary exile from Makkah in company with their beloved Leader, and their good friends in Madinah, who gave them asylum and every kind of assistance, moral and material.

Under the magnetic personality of the Holy Prophet these two groups became like blood-brothers, and they were so treated in matters of inheritance during the period when they were cut off from their kith and kin.

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُواْ مَا لَكُم مِّن وَلاَيَتِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ حَتَّى يُهَاجِرُواْ...

As to those who believed but came not into exile, ye owe no duty of protection to them until they come into exile;

C1240. The Believers (Muslims) were entitled to all assistance in matters of religion. But if they were not strong enough to suffer voluntary exile on behalf of the Cause and make the personal sacrifices which their more ardent brethren in faith made, they could not reasonably ask for political or military assistance or protection.

...وَإِنِ اسْتَنصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلاَّ عَلَى قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ...

But if they seek your aid in religion,it is your duty to help them, except against a people with whom ye have a treaty of mutual alliance:

C1241. If a community suffers voluntary exile on account of persecution and oppression, and some of its weaker brethren stay behind, holding fast to faith but not prepared for the higher sacrifice, the exiles have still a duty to help their weaker brethren in matters of religion.

The exiles, being at open war against the State which oppressed them, would be free to fight against such State. But if the weaker brethren are in a State in mutual alliance with the Community, the Community cannot in honour interfere with that State, whether it is Muslim or not.

Presumably the alliance implies that the grievances of the weaker brethren will be redressed by the State itself. But it is not honourable to embarrass your own ally.

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٧٢)

and (remember) Allah seeth all that ye do.

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاء بَعْضٍ...

73. The unbelievers are protectors, one of another:

...إِلاَّ تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُن فِتْنَةٌ فِي الأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧٣)...

unless ye do this, (protect each other), there would be tumult and oppression on earth, and great mischief.

C1242. Evil consorts with evil. The good have all the more reason for drawing together and not only living in mutual harmony, but being ready at all times to protect each other. Otherwise the world will be given over to aggressions by unscrupulous people, and the good will fail in their duty to establish Allah's Peace and to strengthen all the forces of truth and righteousness.

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَهَاجَرُواْ وَجَاهَدُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

74. Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the Cause of Allah,

...وَالَّذِينَ آوَواْ وَّنَصَرُواْ أُولَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا...

as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid, these are (all) in very truth the believers:

...لَّهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٧٤)...

for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous.

C1243. Believers who make all sacrifices in the Cause of Allah have given the best possible proof of their Faith by their actions. They have loved Allah much, and much will be forgiven them.

What they sacrificed was, perhaps, judged by universal standards, of small value, but its value will be estimated by the precious love behind it, and its reward will be of no ordinary kind.

It will not be a reward in the ordinary sense at all, for a reward is given once for all. It will be a provision which last for ever, and is on the most generous scale.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مِن بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُواْ وَجَاهَدُواْ مَعَكُمْ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ مِنكُمْ...

75. And those who accept faith subsequently, and adopt exile, and fight for the faith in your company, they are of you.

C1244. Those who come into the fold last are none the less brethren in the fullest acceptation of the term. But any special provisions made in the special circumstances of the first martyrs for the Cause will not of course apply to them as the special circumstances which made them necessary have ceased to exist.

See next note.

...وَأُوْلُواْ الأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللّهِ...

But kindred by blood have prior rights against each other in the Book of Allah.

C1245. The Book of Allah: i.e., the Eternal Decree, the Preserved Tablet (85:22).

Blood-relationship and its rights and duties do not depend on special circumstances of a temporary nature. Any temporary rights of mutual inheritance established between the early Emigrants and Helpers (n. 1239) would not apply to later recruits, who would come under entirely different circumstances.

...إِنَّ اللّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧٥)

Verily Allah is well acquainted with all things.

وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

For Allah will turn (in mercy) to whom He will; and Allah is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Tawbah

التَّوبَة

Introduction and Summary

Logically this Surah follows up the argument of the last Surah 8, and indeed may be considered a part of it, although chronologically the two are separated by an interval of seven years.

We saw that Surah 8 dealt with the large questions arising at the outset of the life of a new Ummah or organized nation; question of defence under attack, distribution of war acquisitions after victory, the virtues needed for concerted

action, clemency and consideration for one's own and for enemies in the hour of victory.

We pass on in this Surah to deal with the question; what is to be done if the enemy breaks faith and is guilty of the treachery?

No nation can go on with a treaty if the other party violates it at will; but it is laid down that a period of four months should be allowed by way of notice after denunciation of the treaty; that due protection should be accorded in the intervening period; that there should always be open the door to repentance and reunion with the people of Allah; and if all these fall, and was must be undertaken, it must be pushed with the utmost vigour.

These are the general principles deducible from the Surah. The immediate occasion for their promulgation may be considered in connection with the chronological place of the Surah.

Chronologically, verses 1-29 were a notable declaration of state policy promulgated about the month of Shawwal, A.H. 9, and read out by Ali at the Pilgrimage two months later in order to give the policy the widest publicity possible. The remainder of the Surah, verse 30-129, was revealed a little earlier, say about the month of Ramadan, A.H. 9 and sums up the lessons of the Prophet's Tabuk expedition in the late summer of A.H. 9 (say October 630).

Tabuk is a place near the frontier of Arabia, quite close to what was then Byzantine territory in the Province of Syria (which includes Palestine),. It is on the Hijaz Railway, about 350 miles northwest of Madinah, and 150 miles south of Ma'an. It had a fort and a spring of sweet water. In consequence of strong and persistent rumours that the Byzantines (Romans) were preparing to invade Arabia and that the Byzantine Emperor himself had arrived near the frontier for the purpose, the Prophet collected as large a force as he could, and marched to Tabuk. The Byzantine invasion did not come off. But the Prophet took the opportunity of consolidating the Muslim position in that direction and making treaties of alliance with certain Christian and Jewish tribes near the Gulf of Aqabah. On his return to Madinah he considered the situation. During his absence the Hypocrites had played, as always, a double game; and the

policy hitherto followed, of free access to the sacred centre of Islam to Muslims and Pagans alike- was now altered, as it had been abused by the enemies of Islam.

This is the only Surah to which the usual formula of Bismillah is not prefixed. It was among the last of the Surahs revealed, and though the Prophet had directed that it should follow Surah 8, it was not clear whether it was to form a separate Surah or only a part of Surah 8. It is now treated as a separate Surah, but the Bismillah is not prefixed to it, as there is no warrant for supposing that the Prophet used the Bismillah before it in his recitation of Quran.

The Surah is known under many names; the most commonly used are;

- Al Tawbah (Repentance), with reference to 9:104, and
- Bara'ah (The Disavowed), the opening word of the Surah.

Summary- Treaties with those Pagans who have treacherously broken their terms are denounced, but four months' time is given for adjustments or repentance. Pagan to be excluded from the sacred Mosques. Infidelity to be fought (9:1-29, and C. 93).

The People of the Book have obscured the light of Allah, but the Truth of Allah must prevail over all. We must be ready to fight for the Faith that is in us; otherwise we shall be unworthy to uphold Allah's banner, and He will raise other people in our place (9:30-42, and C. 94).

The Hypocrites and their double dealing; their evil ways pointed out. Their punishment will be as sure as the blessings of the righteous (9:43-72, and C. 95).

All evil should be resisted, unless there is repentance; falsehood is not content with breach of faith but mocks all good; it should not be envied but shunned (9:73-99, and C. 96).

The good pleasure of Allah is with those who are sincere and make sacrifices in His cause; He will forgive those who do wrong and repent, but not those who intend mischief and

foment unbelief and disunion among believers. The Believers by their self-surrender obtain eternal Felicity. Allah will turn in mercy even to those who, though they waver or fail in duty, turn at last to Him (9:100-118, and C. 97).

Those who believe should associate with the righteous and the truthful, actively doing their duty. But if the Community marches out, a part of them should remain behind for the purpose of diligently studying religion and teaching their brethren when they return. Every Surah increases the faith of those who believe, though those diseased in heart may add doubt to doubt. Trust in Allah, Lord of the Throne of Glory (9:119-129, and C. 98).

C.93 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:1-29)

If the Pagans repeatedly break
Their treaties, denounce the treaties,
But give them time either to repent
Or to prepare for the just punishment
Of their treachery. Punish the chiefs
Of the treacherous, and destroy them.
But if one of them seek asylum,
Give it; let him hear the Word
Of Allah and escort him to security.
Be true to the true, but fight those
Who are false to plighted word
And taunt you for your Faith.
No one has the right to approach
The mosques of Allah unless
He believes in Allah and follows
Allah's Law, the law of righteousness.

بَرَاءةٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدتُّم مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١)

1. A (declaration) of immunity from Allah and His Messenger, to those of the pagans with whom ye have contracted mutual alliances.

C1246. Baraah: usually translated "immunity".

I do not think that word correctly represents the Arabic word in this context. The general sense is explained in the introduction to this Surah. In verse 3 below I use the periphrasis "dissolve treaty obligations." which goes some way to explain the meaning.

The Pagans and enemies of Islam frequently made treaties of mutual alliance with the Muslims. The Muslims scrupulously observed their part, but the Pagans violated their part again and again when it suited them. After some years, experience it became imperative to denounce such treaties altogether. This was done in due form, with four months' notice, and a chance was given to those who faithfully observed their pledges, to continue their alliance.

فَسِيحُوا فِي الأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللّهِ...

2. Go ye, then, for four months, backwards and forwards, (as ye will), throughout the land, but know ye that ye cannot frustrate Allah (by your falsehood)

C1247. Four Months: Some Commentators understand by this the four forbidden months in which warfare by ancient Arabian custom was unlawful, viz., Rajah. Dhu al Qadah, Dhu al Hijjah and Muharram:

See note 209 to 2:194..

But it is better to take the signification of the four months immediately following the Declaration. Assuming that the Surah was promulgated early in Shawwal (see Introduction), the four months would be Shawwal, Dhu al Qadah, Dhu al Hijjah and Muharram, of which the last three would also be the customary Prohibited Months.

...وَأَنَّ اللّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ (٢)

but that Allah will cover with shame those who reject him.

وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الأَكْبَرِ...

3. And an announcement from Allah and His Messenger, to the people (assembled) on the day of the Great Pilgrimage,

C1248. The great day of Hajj is either the 9th of Dhu al Hijjah ('Arafa), or the 10th (the Day of Sacrifice).

...أَنَّ اللّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ...

that Allah and His Messenger dissolve (treaty) obligations with the pagans.

...فَإِن تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ...

If, then, ye repent, it were best for you;

...وَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللّهِ... ...

but if ye turn away, know ye that ye cannot frustrate Allah.

...وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٣)

And proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject faith.

إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ عَاهَدتُّم مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا...

4. (But the treaties are) not dissolved with those pagans with whom ye have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught,

C1249. The sacred duty of fulfilling all obligations of every kind, to Muslims and non Muslims, in public as well as private life, is a cardinal feature of Muslim ethics.

The question what is to be done with those who abuse this principle by failing in their duty but expect the Muslims to do their part is not to be solved (in the case of treaties) by a general denunciation of treaties but by a careful consideration of the cases where there has been fidelity and not treachery.

There we are enjoined to give the strictest fidelity, as it is a part of righteousness and our duty to Allah.

وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا ...

nor aided anyone against you.

... فَأَتِمُّوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَى مُدَّتِهِمْ...

So fulfil your engagements with them to the end of their term:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٤)

for Allah loveth the righteous.

فَإِذَا انسَلَخَ الأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ ...

5. But when the forbidden months are past,

C1250. The emphasis is on the first clause; it is only when the four months of grace are past, and the other party show no signs of desisting from their treacherous designs by right conduct, that the state of war supervenes-between Faith and Unfaith.

... فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدتُّمُوهُمْ...

then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them

C1251. When war becomes inevitable, it must be prosecuted with vigour.

According to the English phrase, you cannot fight with kid gloves. The fighting may take the form of killing, capture, or siege, or ambush and other stratagems.

But even then there is room for repentance and amendment on the part of the guilty party, and if that takes place, our duty is forgiveness and the establishment of peace.

...وَخُذُوهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ... ...

and seize them, beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war);

...فَإِن تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ...

but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them:

C1252. The repentance must be sincere, and that is shown by conduct-a religious spirit of true prayer and charity.

In that case we are not to bar the gate against the repentant. On the contrary we must do all we can to make their way easy, remembering that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

...إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٥)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

... وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ

6. If one amongst the pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him,

C1253. Even among the enemies of Islam, actively fighting against Islam, there may be individuals who may be in a position to require protection. Full asylum is to be given to them, and opportunities provided for hearing the Word of Allah.

If they accept the Word, they become Muslims and brethren, and no further question arises. If they do not see their way to accept Islam, they will require double protection:

- from the Islamic forces openly fighting against their people, and
- from their own people, as they detached themselves from them.

Both kinds of protection should be ensured for them, and they should be safely escorted to a place where they can be safe. Such persons only err through ignorance, and there may be much good in them.

... فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلاَمَ اللّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ...

so that he may hear the word of Allah and then escort him to where he can be secure:

C1254. Ma'manah: place or opportunity of being secure from all harm.

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لاَّ يَعْلَمُونَ (٦)

that is because they are men without knowledge.

Section 2

كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِندَ اللّهِ وَعِندَ رَسُولِهِ...

7. How can there be a league before Allah and His Messenger, with the pagans,

...إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ عَاهَدتُّمْ عِندَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ...

except those with whom ye made a treaty near the sacred mosque?

C1255. In this section we have the reasons why the treaties with treacherous Pagan foes were denounced.

The clause introducing the exception is a parenthetical clause. The word "Pagans" must be connected with verse 8 which follows. In that verse the word kaifa resumes the clause introduced by the word kaifa at the beginning of verse 7.

The exceptional Pagan tribes which remained true to their word were the Banu Hamza and the Banu Kinana, who swore their treaty near the Sacred Mosque and faithfully observed it. They were to be given the full benefit of their fidelity even though their kindred tribes were treacherous.

... فَمَا اسْتَقَامُواْ لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُواْ لَهُمْ...

As long as these stand true to you, stand ye true to them:

...إِنَّ اللّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٧)

For Allah doth love the righteous.

... كَيْفَ

8. How (can there be such a league),

C1256. The exceptions having been stated parenthetically in verse 7, the indictment of the general mass of Pagan tribes is now set out briefly but fully and convincingly.

After that kind of behaviour how can treaty be possible with them? The counts are:

1. that whenever they got a slight advantage, they disregarded the ties both of kinship and of covenant as against the Muslims because of their Faith, thus proving doubly treacherous;
2. that they spoke fair words, but had venom in their hearts;
3. that their attitude was one of rebellion against their plighted word;
4. that they disregarded the solemn words of Allah for some miserable worldly gain;
5. that they tried to prevent other people from coming to the Way of Allah.

The first clause is repeated again as the last clause, to emphasize their double treachery, and round off the argument.

... وَإِن يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لاَ يَرْقُبُواْ فِيكُمْ إِلاًّ وَلاَ ذِمَّةً...

seeing that if they get an advantage over you, they respect not in you the ties either of kinship or of covenant?

C1257. Among the Arabs the ties of kinship were so strong as to be almost unbreakable. The Pagan Arabs went out of their way to break them in the case of the Muslims, who were kith and kin to them.

Besides the bond of kinship there was the further bond of their plighted oath in the Treaty. They broke that oath because the other parties were Muslims!

...يُرْضُونَكُم بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَى قُلُوبُهُمْ...

With (fair words from) their mouths they entice you, but their hearts are averse from you;

...وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٨)

and most of them are rebellious and wicked.

...اشْتَرَوْاْ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً فَصَدُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ

9. The signs of Allah have they sold for a miserable price, and (many) have they hindered from His way:

...إِنَّهُمْ سَاء مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (٩)

evil indeed are the deeds they have done.

...لاَ يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلاًّ وَلاَ ذِمَّةً

10. In a believer they respect not the ties either of kinship or of covenant!

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ (١٠)

It is they who have transgressed all bounds.

C1258. The catalogue of their sins being set out, it is clear that they were aggressors in the worst possible ways; and war became inevitable.

...فَإِن تَابُواْ وَأَقَامُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَوُاْ الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ

11. But (even so), if they repent, establish regular prayers, and practice regular charity, they are your brethren in faith:

C1259. The chance of repentance and mercy to the worst enemies is again emphasised, in order that people with any understanding may not be misled into thinking that war was an easy or light matter.

This emphasis is balanced by the emphasis in the next verse on the causes which made war inevitable for those with any self-respect.

...وَنُفَصِّلُ الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (١١)

(thus) do We explain signs in detail, for those who understand.

...وَإِن نَّكَثُواْ أَيْمَانَهُم مِّن بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُواْ فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُواْ أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ

12. But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and taunt you for your faith, fight ye the chiefs of unfaith:

C1260. Not only did the enemies break their oaths shamelessly, but they even taunted the Muslims on their Faith and the "simple-minded" way in which they continued to respect their part of the treaty, as if they were afraid to fight!

...إِنَّهُمْ لاَ أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنتَهُونَ (١٢)

for their oaths are nothing to them:

that thus they may be restrained.

...أَلاَ تُقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَّكَثُواْ أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّواْ بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ...

13. Will ye not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger,

C1261. The argument now takes a new turn. An appeal is made to the Muslims on various grounds:

- the shameless disregard of treaties by the enemy,
- the under-hand plots to discredit the Holy Prophet, and turn him out of Madinah as he had been turned out of Makkah,
- the aggression taken by the Quraish and their confederates in Madinah after the treaty of Hudaybiyah (A.H. 6, Dhu al Qadah. Feb. 628),
- the manly attitude that fears Allah rather than men, and
- the need to prove our sincere faith by test and trial and struggle and sacrifice (9:16).

...وَهُم بَدَؤُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ...

and took the aggressive by being the first (to assault) you?

...أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ...

Do ye fear them?

...فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَن تَخْشَوْهُ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٣)

Nay, it is Allah whom ye should more justly fear, if ye believe!

...قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ

14. Fight them, and Allah will punish them by your hands,
cover them with shame,

...وَيَنصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٤)

help you (to victory) over them, heal the breasts of believers.

C1262. Heal the breasts of believers, i.e., of wounds that they may have sustained from the assaults, taunts, and cruelty of the enemy.

...وَيُذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قُلُوبِهِمْ

15. And still the indignation of their hearts.

C1263. When the victory comes and the wounds are healed, a great peace comes to the hearts of those who have suffered, striven, and struggled.

The fighting was necessity forced by injustice and oppression. When Allah's Law is established, the fire of indignation is quelled, and the true Peace of Islam is attained.

...وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَن يَشَاءُ...

For Allah will turn (in mercy) to whom He will;

C1264. Allah's mercy is unlimited. When evil is destroyed, many of those who were enticed by evil will come into the fold of truth and righteousness, and the cessation of war and conflict will bring peace, certainly to those who fought for the right, but also possibly to those whose eyes have been opened to the working of Allah's Law and who in healing reconciliation become members of the Brotherhood of Peace ill Islam.

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٥)

and Allah is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَن تُتْرَكُواْ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُواْ مِنكُمْ...

16. Or think ye that ye shall be abandoned, as though Allah did not know those among you who strive with might and main,

C1265. Some translators have taken a different verbal construction of this passage, but the ultimate effect in meaning is the same: we must all be tested and tried, but Allah knows our inmost hearts, and He will support those who strive in His way, out of sincere love for Him, His Prophet, and the body of the true men of faith.

...وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُواْ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ وَلاَ رَسُولِهِ وَلاَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً...

and take none for friends and protectors except Allah, His Messenger, and the (community of) believers?

...وَاللّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٦)

But Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

Section 3

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَن يَعْمُرُواْ مَسَاجِدَ الله شَاهِدِينَ عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ...

17. It is not for such as join gods with Allah, to visit or maintain the mosques of Allah while they witness against their own souls to infidelity.

C1266. **'Amara** as applied to mosques implies the following ideas:

- to build or repair:
- to maintain in fitting dignity:
- to visit for purposes of devotion: and
- fill with light and life and activity.

For brevity I have only used "maintain" in the Translation. Before the preaching of Islam the Pagans built, repaired, and maintained the Mosque, and celebrated Pagan ceremonies in it. They made an income out of it. Islam protested, and the Pagans ejected Muslims and their Leader from Makkah and shut them out from the Ka'bah itself.

When the Muslims were strong enough to re-take Makkah (A.H. 8), they purified the Mosque and re-established the worship of the true God. If they became Muslims, it was a different matter. The further question arose: should they be allowed to visit it and practice their unseemly Pagan rites?

Obviously this would be derogatory to the dignity and honour of the Mosque, and was forbidden. This was the particular occasion to which the verse refers.

The general deduction is clear. A house of Allah is a place of sincere devotion, not a theatre for vulgar rites nor a source of worldly income. Only sincere Believers have a right of entry.

Who the sincere Believers are, is explained in the next verse.

...أُوْلَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَفِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ (١٧)

The works of such bear no fruit:

in fire shall they dwell.

...إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

18. The mosques of Allah shall be visited and maintained by such as

- believe in Allah and the Last Day,

...وَأَقَامَ الصَّلاَةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ...

- establish regular prayers,
- and practice regular charity,
- and fear none (at all) except Allah.

C1267. See the previous note.

Sincere Believers are those who have faith in Allah and the future, and have a spirit of devotion and charity -a true and abiding spirit, not merely isolated acts now and again.

Moreover they must not bow to worldly greed or ambition, which produces fear of worldly power.

...فَعَسَى أُوْلَـئِكَ أَن يَكُونُواْ مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ (١٨)

It is they who are expected to be on true guidance.

C1268. Others may call themselves by what names they like. True guidance is shown by the tests here indicated.

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ...

19. Do ye make the giving of drink to pilgrims, or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque, equal to (the pious service of)

C1269. Giving drinks of cold water to thirsty pilgrims, and doing material services to a mosque are meritorious acts, but they are only external. If they do not touch the soul, their value is slight. Far greater, in the sight of Allah, are Faith, Endeavour, and self-surrender to Allah.

Men who practice these will obtain honour in the sight of Allah. Allah's light and guidance comes to them, and not to those self-sufficient beings who think that a little show of what the world considers piety is enough.

...آمَنَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ ...

those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and strive with might and main in the Cause of Allah?

...لاَ يَسْتَوُونَ عِندَ اللّهِ...

They are not comparable in the sight of Allah:

...وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٩)

and Allah guides not those who do wrong.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَهَاجَرُواْ وَجَاهَدُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ أَعْظَمُ

دَرَجَةً عِندَ اللّهِ...

20. Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in **Allah's** cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah:

C1270. Here is it good description of Jihad. It may require fighting in Allah's cause, its a form of self-sacrifice. But its essence consists in;

- a true and sincere Faith, which so fixes its gaze on Allah, that all selfish or worldly motives seem paltry and fade away, and
- an earnest and ceaseless activity, involving the sacrifice (if need be) of life, person, or property, in the service of Allah.

Mere brutal fighting is opposed to the whole spirit of Jihad, while the sincere scholar's pen or preacher's voice or wealthy man's contributions may be the most valuable forms of Jihad.

...وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ (٢٠)

They are the people who will achieve (salvation).

يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُم بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٢١)

21. Their Lord doth give them Glad tidings of a Mercy from Himself, of His good pleasure, and of gardens for them, wherein are delights that endure.

...خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا

22. They will dwell therein forever.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢٢)

Verily in Allah's presence is a reward, the greatest (of all).

C1271. Those who strive and suffer in Allah's cause are promised;

- a mercy specially from Himself,
- His own good pleasure,
- gardens of perpetual delight,
- the supreme reward.

Allah's own nearness. These are in gradation:

- is a special mercy, higher than flows out to all creatures:
- is a consciousness of Allah's good pleasure, which raises the soul above itself:
- is that state of permanent assurance, and
- is the final bliss, which is the sight of Allah Himself. (R).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ آبَاءكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاء إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّواْ الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الإِيمَانِ...

23. O ye who believe!

take not for protectors your fathers and your brothers if they love infidelity above faith:

...وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُم مِّنكُمْ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٣)

if any of you do so, they do wrong.

...قُلْ إِن كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ

24. Say:

If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates,

...وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا...

or your kindred;

the wealth that ye have gained;

the commerce in which ye fear a decline;

...وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا ...

or the dwellings in which ye delight,

C1272. Man's heart clings to;

- his own kith and kin-parents, children, brothers and sisters, husbands or wives, or other relatives,
- wealth and prosperity,
- commerce or means of profit and gain, or

- noble buildings, for dignity or comfort.

If these are a hindrance in Allah's cause, we have to choose which we love most. We must love Allah even if it involves the sacrifice of all else.

... أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُم مِّنَ اللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ ...

are dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger,

or the striving in his cause;

...فَتَرَبَّصُواْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ...

then wait until Allah brings about His decision:

C1273. If we love our earthly ties and comfort's, profits and pleasures, more than we love Allah, and therefore fail to respond to Allah's cause, it is not Allah's cause which will suffer, Allah's purpose will be accomplished, with or without us. But our failure to respond to His will must leave us spiritually poorer, bereft of grace and guidance: "for Allah guides not the rebellious".

This is of universal application. But it was strikingly illustrated in the case of those faithful ones who obeyed the Prophet's call, left the comfort of their homes in Makkah and suffered exile in Madinah, gave up their trade and their possessions, strove and fought for Allah's cause, sometimes against their own kith and kin or their own tribesmen who were enemies of Islam. They won through. Others were not prepared for such sacrifice, but their failure did not stop the accomplishment of Allah's plan and purpose.

...وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٢٤)

and Allah guides not the rebellious.

Section 4

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ...

25. Assuredly Allah did help you in many battlefields

...وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ...

and on the day of Hunayn:

C1274. Hunayn is on the road to Taif from Makkah about fourteen miles to the east of Makkah. It is a valley in the mountainous country between Makkah and Taif.

Immediately after the conquest of Makkah, (A.H. 8), the Pagan idolaters, who were surprised and chagrined at the wonderful reception which Islam was receiving, organized a great gathering near Taif to concert plans for attacking the Prophet.

The Hawazin and the Thaqif tribes took the lead and prepared a great expedition for Makkah, boasting of their strength and military skill. There was on the other hand a wave of confident enthusiasm among the Muslims at Makkah, in which the new Muslims joined. The enemy forces numbered about 4,000 but the Muslim force reached a total of ten or twelve thousand, as every one wished to join. The battle was joined at Hunain, as described in the next note.

... إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنكُمْ شَيْئًا...

Behold! your great numbers elated you, but they availed you naught:

...وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ...

the land, for all that it is wide, did constrain you,

...ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُم مُّدْبِرِينَ (٢٥)

and ye turned back in retreat.

C1275. For the first time the Muslims had at Hunayn tremendous odds in their favour. But this itself constituted a danger. Many in their ranks had more enthusiasm than wisdom, more a spirit of elation than of faith and confidence in the righteousness of their cause.

The enemy had the advantage of knowing the ground thoroughly. They laid an ambush in which the advance guard of the Muslim forces was caught. The country is hilly, in which the enemy concealed himself. As soon as

the Muslim vanguard entered the Hunain valley, the enemy fell upon them with fury and caused havoc with their arrows from their places of concealment.

In such ground the numbers of the Muslims were themselves a disadvantage. Many were slain, and many turned back in confusion and retreat. But the Prophet, as ever, was calm in his wisdom and faith. He rallied his forces and inflicted the most crushing defeat on the enemy.

ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ اللّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

26. But Allah did pour His calm on the Messenger and on the believers

C1276. Sakin: calm, peace, security, tranquility.

Cf. 2:248.

The Prophet never approved of over-weening confidence, or reliance merely upon human strength, or human resources or numbers. In the hour of danger and seeming disaster, he was perfectly calm, and with cool courage relied upon the help of Allah. Whose standard he carried. His calmness inspired all around him, and stopped the rout of those who had turned their backs.

It was with Allah's help that they won, and their victory was complete. They followed it up with an energetic pursuit of the enemies, capturing their camps, their flocks and herds, and their families, whom they had boastfully brought with them in expectation of an easy victory.

...وَأَنزَلَ جُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ...

and sent down forces which ye saw not:

He punished the unbelievers:

...وَذَلِكَ جَزَاء الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٦)

thus doth He reward those without faith.

ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللّهُ مِن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَلَى مَن يَشَاء...

27. Again will Allah, after this, turn (in mercy) to whom He will:

C1277. Examples of Allah's mercy and grace in difficult circumstances in one case illustrate His grace and mercy at all times to those who have faith.

...وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٧)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ

28. O ye who believe!

...إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ ...

truly the pagans are unclean;

C1278. Unclean: because Muslims are enjoined to be strict in cleanliness, as well as in purity of mind and heart, so that their word can be relied upon.

... فَلاَ يَقْرَبُواْ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَـذَا...

so let them not, after this year of theirs, approach the Sacred Mosque.

C1279. This year of theirs: there is a two-fold meaning:

1. now that you have complete control of Makkah and are, charged with the purity of worship there, shut out all impurity from this year:
2. you have seen how the Pagans have behaved this year; their year of power and misuse of that power may be called their year; it is over, and now you Muslims are responsible.

...وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ إِن شَاء...

And if ye fear poverty, soon will Allah enrich you, if He wills, out of His bounty,

C1280. The concourse in Makkah added to the profits of trade and commerce. "But fear not," we are told: "the Pagans are a waning power, bound to disappear, and you should strengthen your own community, that they

may more than counter-balance the apparent loss of custom; and Allah has other means of improving your economic position."

This actually happened. The Pagans were extinguished from Arabia, and the concourse of pilgrims from all parts of the world increased the numbers more than a hundred-fold.

Here is commonsense, wisdom, and statesmanship, even if we look at it from a purely human point of view.

...إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٨)

for Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

قَاتِلُواْ الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَلاَ بِالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

29. Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day,

...وَلاَ يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ...

nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger,

...وَلاَ يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْكِتَابَ...

nor acknowledge the religion of truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book,

...حَتَّى يُعْطُواْ الْجِزْيَةَ ...

until they pay the Jizyah

C1281. Jizyah: the root meaning is compensation.

The derived meaning, which became the technical meaning, was a poll-tax levied from those who did not accept Islam, but were willing to live under the protection of Islam, and were thus tacitly willing to submit to its ideals being enforced in the Muslim State.

There was no amount permanently fixed for it. It was in acknowledgment that those whose religion was tolerated would in their turn not interfere with the preaching and progress of Islam. Imam Shafi'i suggests one dinar per year, which would be the Arabian gold dinar of the Muslim States.

The tax varied in amount, and there were exemptions for the poor, for females and children (according to Abu Hanifa), for slaves, and for monks and hermits. Being a tax on able-bodied males of military age, it was in a sense a commutation for military service. But see the next note.

... عَن يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (٢٩)

with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

C1282. 'An Yadin: literally, from the hand, has been variously interpreted. The hand being the symbol of power and authority. I accept the interpretation "in token of willing submission."

The Jizyah was thus partly symbolic and partly a commutation for military service, but as the amount was insignificant and the exemptions numerous, its symbolic character predominated. See the last note.

C.94 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:30-42)

The enemies of Faith would fain put out
Allah's light, but Allah's light will shine
More glorious than ever. Wealth
Is for use and on trust for mankind:
Hoard not, nor misuse it. Fight
A straight fight in the cause of Right:
Go forth bravely to strive and struggle,
And prove yourselves worthy of Allah.

Section 5

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللّهِ...

30. The Jews call Uzayr a son of God,

C1283. In n. 718 to 5:18, 1 have quoted passages from the Old Testament, showing how freely the expression "sons of Allah" was used by the Jews. A sect of them called 'Uzair a son of Allah, according to Baidhawl.

In Appendix II (Surah 5) I have shown that the constitution of Judaism dates from 'Uzair (Ezra). The Christians still call Christ the Son of God.

...وَقَالَتْ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللّهِ...

and the Christians call Christ the son of God.

...ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُم بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ...

That is a saying from their mouths;

...يُضَاهِؤُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن قَبْلُ...

(in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say.

C1284. Taking men for gods or sons of Allah was not a new thing. All ancient mythologies have fables of that kind. There was less excuse for such blasphemies after the Prophets of Allah had clearly explained out true relation to Allah than in the times of primitive ignorance and superstition.

...قَاتَلَهُمُ اللّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٣٠)

Allah's curse be on them:

how they are deluded away from the truth!

C1285. Cf. 5:75.

...اتَّخَذُواْ أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ ...

31. They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah,

C1286. Ahbar: doctors of law; priests; learned men. Cf. 5:44. where they are associated with Rabbis.

Ruhban: monks, ascetics, anchorites, men who have renounced the world; where there is a celibate clergy, the term can be applied to them as well as to members of monastic orders.

It is also permissible to apply the term to "saints", where they are deified or credited with divine powers, or where people pray to them as they do in the Roman Catholic Church.

C1287. Priest worship, and the worship of saints and ascetics is a form of superstition to which men have been prone in all ages. The growth of Jewish superstition is shown in the Talmud, and of Christian superstition in the doctrine of papal infallibility and the worship of saints. The mere idea of a separate order of priesthood to stand between Allah and man and be the exclusive repository of Allah's secrets is derogatory to the goodness and all-pervading grace of Allah.

The worship of "lords many and gods many" was not confined only to the Pagans. The deification of the son of Mary is put here in a special clause by itself, as it held (and still holds) in its thrall a large portion of civilized humanity.

... وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ...

and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary;

...وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلاَّ لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَـهًا وَاحِدًا...

Yet they were commanded to worship but one God:

...لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ...

there is no god but He.

...سُبْحَانَهُ ...

Praise and glory to Him:

C1288. Cf. 6:100.

... عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٣١)

(far is He) from having the parents they associate (with him).

...يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِؤُوا نُورَ اللّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ...

32. Fain would they extinguish Allah's Light with their mouths,

C1289. With their mouths: there is a twofold meaning:

- the old-fashioned open oil lamps were extinguished by blowing with the mouth; the Unbelievers would like to blow out Allah's Light as it is a cause of offence to them;
- false teachers and preachers distort the Message of Allah by the false words of their mouth.

Their wish is to put out the light of Truth for they are people of darkness; but Allah will perfect His Light, i.e., make it shine all the brighter in the eyes of men.

His Light in itself is ever perfect, but it will penetrate the hearts of men more and more, and so become more and more perfect for them.

...وَيَأْبَى اللّهُ إِلاَّ أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ (٣٢)

but Allah will not allow but that His Light should be perfected, even though the unbelievers may detest (it).

...هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ

33. It is He who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and religion of truth,

...لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٣٣)

to proclaim it over all religions, even though the pagans may detest (it).

C1290. Every religion which commends itself widely to human beings and lasts through some space of time has a glimpse of Truth in it. But Islam being the perfect light of Truth is bound to prevail.

As the greater Light, through its own strength, outshines all lesser lights, so will Islam outshine all else, in spite of the displeasure of those to whom light is an offence.

See also 48:28, n. 4912, and 61:9, n. 5442.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ...

34. O ye who believe!

إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الأحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ...

there are indeed many among the priests and anchorites, who in false hood devour the substance of men

C1291. Bil-batili: in falsehood. i.e., by false means, pretences, or in false or vain things.

This was strikingly exemplified in the history of Mediaeval Europe. Though the disease is apt to attack all peoples and organizations at all times. Priests got rich by issuing indulgences and dispensations; they made their office a stepping stone to worldly power and possessions.

Even the Monastic Orders, which took vows of poverty for individuals grew rich with corporate property, until their wealth became a scandal, even among their own nations.

...وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

and hinder (them) from the way of Allah.

...وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلاَ يُنفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah:

C1292. Misuse of wealth, property, and resources is frequently condemned, and in three ways:

1. do not acquire anything wrongfully or on false pretences;
2. do not hoard or bury or amass wealth for its own sake but use it freely for good, whether for yourself or for your neighbors; and
3. be particularly careful not to waste it for idle purposes, but only so that it may fructify for the good of the people.

...فَبَشِّرْهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٣٤)

announce unto them a most grievous penalty.

يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ...

35. On the day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs,

C1293. Gold and silver, symbolizing wealth which these people cherished even more than the good pleasure of their Lord, will not only be the cause but the instrument whereby they would receive a grievous punishment. (Ed.).

...هَـذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لأنفُسِكُمْ ...

"This is the (treasure) which ye buried for yourselves:

C1294. The voice enforces the moral:

"did you expect satisfaction or salvation from the treasures that you misused?

Behold! they add to your torment!"

... فَذُوقُواْ مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ (٣٥)

taste ye, then, the (treasures) ye buried!"

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِندَ اللّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ...

36. The number of months in the sight of Allah is twelve (in a year) so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth;

C1295. This and the following verse must be read together. They condemn the arbitrary and selfish conduct of the Pagan Arabs, who, because there was a long-established custom of observing four months as those in which fighting was forbidden, changed the months about or added or deducted months when it suited them, to get an unfair advantage over the enemy.

The four Prohibited Months were:

- Dhu al Qadah,
- Dhu al Hijjah,

- Muharram, and
- Rajab.

If it suited them they postponed one of these months, and so a prohibited month became an ordinary month: while their opponents might hesitate to fight, they got an undue advantage. It also upset the security of the Month of Pilgrimage. This very ancient usage made for fair dealing all round, and its infraction by the Pagans is condemned.

The question of a solar astronomical year as against the lunar Islamic year does not arise here. But it may be noted that the Arab year was roughly luni-solar like the Hindu year, the months being lunar and the intercalation of a month every three years brought the year nearly but not accurately up to the solar reckoning.

From the year of the Farewell Pilgrimage (A.H.10) the Islamic year was definitely fixed as a purely lunar year of roughly 354 days, the months being calculated by the actual appearance of the moon. After that, every month of the Islamic year came about 11 days earlier in the solar year, and thus the Islamic months travelled all round the seasons and the solar year. (R).

...مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ...

of them four are sacred;

...ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنفُسَكُمْ...

that is the straight usage. So wrong not yourselves therein,

C1296. The Muslims were at a disadvantage on account of their scruples about the Prohibited Months. They are told not to wrong themselves in this. If the Pagans fought in all months on one pretence or another, they were allowed to defend themselves in all months. But self-restraint was (as always) recommended as far as possible.

...وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً...

and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together.

...وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٦)

But know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves.

إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ ...

37. Verily the transposing (of a prohibited month) is an addition to unbelief:

C1297. To meddle with an old-established custom of close time for warfare during Prohibited or Sacred Months was not only a demonstration of the Unbelievers against the Muslims on account of their Faith, but was wrong and unjust in itself, as it abolished a wholesome check on unregulated warfare, and prejudiced the law-abiding side by arbitrary decisions.

... يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

the unbelievers are led to wrong thereby:

...يُحِلُّونَهُ عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِّيُوَاطِؤُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ...

for they make it lawful one year, and forbidden another year, in order to adjust the number of months forbidden by Allah

...فَيُحِلُّوا مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ...

and make such forbidden ones lawful.

...زُيِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ أَعْمَالِهِمْ...

The evil of their course seems pleasing to them.

C1298. Cf. 6:122.

The lawless man thinks he is doing a great thing in getting the better of those who are careful to observe a law they believe in. But the lawless man loses the guidance of Faith he will therefore lose in the end.

...وَاللَّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٣٧)

But Allah guideth not those who reject faith.

Section 6

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَا لَكُمْ ...

38. O ye who believe!

what is the matter with you,

C1299. The immediate reference is to the expeditions to Tabuk (A.H. 9), for which see the Introduction to this Surah.

But the lesson is perfectly general. When a call is made on behalf of a great cause, the fortunate ones are those who have the privilege of responding to the call.

The unfortunate ones are those who are so engrossed in their parochial affairs that they turn a deaf ear to the appeal. They are suffering from a spiritual disease.

... إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمُ انفِرُواْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الأَرْضِ...

then, when ye are asked to go forth in the Cause of Allah, ye cling heavily to the earth?

C1300. The choice is between two courses:

- will you choose a noble adventure and the glorious privilege of following your spiritual leader, or
- grovel in the earth for some small worldly gain or for fear of worldly loss?

The people who hesitated to follow the call of Tabuk were deterred by;

- the heat of the summer, in which tile expedition was undertaken on account of the threat to the existence of the little community, and
- the fear of losing the fruit harvest, which was ripe for gathering.

...أَرَضِيتُم بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الآخِرَةِ...

Do ye prefer the life of this world to the hereafter?

...فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الآخِرَةِ إِلاَّ قَلِيلٌ (٣٨)

But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the hereafter.

...إِلاَّ تَنفِرُواْ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

39. Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty,

C1301. Tanfiru: go forth, march onward, be ready to strive and suffer.

For this is the condition of all progress in the spiritual and moral, as well as in the physical, world. According to the homely English proverb, God helps those who help themselves.

Inactivity and lethargy are fatal. No one can rest on his oars. Man is not necessary to Allah, but Allah is necessary to man. If a nation receives favours and fails to deserve them, it will be replaced by another: as has so often happened in history. We may take this as a special warning to Islamic nations.

...وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلاَ تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا...

and put others in your place;

but Him ye would not harm in the least.

...وَاللّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٣٩)

For Allah hath power over all things.

...إِلاَّ تَنصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللّهُ

40. If ye help not (your Leader), (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him:

C1302. The Tabuk expedition was not a failure. Though some hesitated, many more joined in.

But a more striking example was when the Prophet was hunted out of Makkah and performed his famous Hijrah. His enemies plotted for his life. He had already sent his followers on to Madinah. Ali had volunteered to face his

enemies in his house. His single companion was Abu Bakr.

They two concealed themselves in the cave of Thaur, three miles from Makkah, for three nights, with the enemy prowling around in great numbers in fruitless search of them.

"We are but two," said Abu Bakr.

"Nay," said Muhammad, "for Allah is with us."

Faith gave their minds peace, and Allah gave them safety. They reached Madinah, and a glorious chapter opened for Islam. The forces that helped them were not seen, but their power was irresistible. (R).

... إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ...

when the unbelievers drove him out: he had no more than one companion:

C1303. Literally, "The second of two," which afterwards became Abu Bakr's proud title.

إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ...

they two were in the cave,

...إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لاَ تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللّهَ مَعَنَا...

and he said to his companion,

"Have no fear, for Allah is with us":

...فَأَنزَلَ اللّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا...

then Allah sent down His peace upon him, and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not,

C1304. Cf. 9:26.

...وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ السُّفْلَى وَكَلِمَةُ اللّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا...

and humbled to the depths the word of the unbelievers.

But the word of Allah is exalted to the heights:

C1305. The superlatives in the Arabic I have rendered by the periphrasis "humbled to the depths" and "exalted

to the heights," as they accord better with the genius of the English language.

The enemies of Islam had boasted that they would root it out: the result showed them up as ridiculous and despicable.

...وَاللّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٤٠)

for Allah is Exalted in might, Wise.

...انْفِرُواْ خِفَافًا وَثِقَالاً وَجَاهِدُواْ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ

41. Go ye forth, (whether equipped) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons, in the Cause of Allah.

C1306. Whether equipped lightly or heavily: to be taken both literally and metaphorically.

All were invited, and they were to bring such resources as they had, light-armed or heavy-armed, on foot or mounted, experienced men for posts of danger, raw men for duties for which they were fit. All would and should help. Even those who were too old or feeble to go could contribute such money or resources as they had.

...ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤١)

That is best for you, if ye (but) knew.

لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لاَّتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَـكِن بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ

الشُّقَّةُ...

42. If there had been immediate gain (in sight), and the journey easy, they would (all) without doubt have followed thee, but the distance was long, (and weighed) on them.

...وَسَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللّهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ ...

They would indeed swear by Allah,

"If we only could, we should certainly have come out with you"

...يُهْلِكُونَ أنفُسَهُمْ ...

they would destroy their own souls;

C1307. The arts and excuses of the Hypocrites are here exposed. If there had been booty in sight or an easy walk-over, they would have come. All their oaths are false, and in taking the false oaths they are destroying their spiritual life.

Indeed the backsliders are jeopardizing their own physical lives in hanging back. If the enemy succeeded, they would all suffer.

... وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (٤٢)

for Allah doth know that they are certainly lying.

C.95 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:43-72)

The Believers do their duty, and make
No excuses-unlike the Hypocrites,
Who are a burden whether they join you
Or hold back. No help should be accepted
From these last, as they are false and insincere.
And have a slanderous tongue. Alms
Are for the poor and needy, nor for those
Who come in hypocrisy and mock
At things solemn. But the Hypocrites
Will be found out and receive due punishment.
While the righteous will be rewarded
With bliss and the good pleasure of Allah.

Section 7

عَفَا اللّهُ ...

43. Allah give thee grace!

C1308. Literally, "Allah give thee forgiveness!"

But there is no question of fault here, and Imam Razi understands the expression to mean an exclamation, -as one might say in English, "God bless you!"

In Shakespeare "God save you!" is a simple friendly greeting, without any question of danger: e. g., in "Much Ado about Nothing." iii. 2, 82.

Note that in 3:152, last clause, "forgiveness" is put in juxtaposition to "grace" as having closely allied meanings.

What the Holy Prophet had done in the Tabuk expedition was that he had been granting exemptions which may appear from a military point of view too liberal. He was not actuated by motives of kindness as well as policy:-

- kindness, because, in the urgency of the moment he did not wish any one who had a real excuse to be refused exemption:

- and policy, because, if any one did not come with hearty good-will, he would be a burden instead of a help to the army.

The policy was justified, because in fact 30,000 men or more followed him. But that did not in any way justify the slackers, and in a review of the position, the slackers and hypocrites are justly condemned.

... عَنكَ لِمَ أَذِنتَ لَهُمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُواْ وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٤٣)

Why didst thou grant them exemption until those who told the truth were seen by thee in a clear light, and thou hadst proved the liars?

لاَ يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

44. Those who believe in Allah and the Last Day ask thee for no exemption

...أن يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ...

from fighting with their goods and persons.

...وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٤)

And Allah knoweth well those who do their duty.

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

45. Only those ask thee for exemption who believe not in Allah and the Last Day,

...وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ (٤٥)

and whose hearts are in doubt, so that they are tossed in their doubts to and fro.

C1309. Doubt takes away all stability of conduct, while Faith makes a man firm in action and cool and collected in mind.

وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً...

46. If they had intended to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation therefor;

...وَلَـكِن كَرِهَ اللّهُ انبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيلَ اقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ (٤٦)

but Allah was averse to their being sent forth; so He made them lag behind and they were told,

"Sit ye among those who sit (inactive)."

لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُم مَّا زَادُوكُمْ إِلاَّ خَبَالاً...

47. If they had come out with you, they would not have added to your (strength) but only (made for) disorder,

... ولأَوْضَعُوا خِلاَلَكُمْ يَبْغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ...

hurrying to and fro in your midst and sowing sedition among you,

C1310. Khilal has more than one meaning, but I follow the interpretation of Raghib and the majority of accepted Commentators, who take it to mean "in your midst".

...وَفِيكُمْ سَمَّاعُونَ لَهُمْ ...

and there would have been some among you who would have listened to them.

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٤٧)

But Allah knoweth well those who do wrong.

لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُاْ الْفِتْنَةَ مِن قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُواْ لَكَ الأُمُورَ...

48. Indeed they had plotted sedition before, and upset matters for thee,

...حَتَّى جَاء الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ اللّهِ وَهُمْ كَارِهُونَ (٤٨)

until The Truth arrived, and the Decree of Allah became manifest, much to their disgust.

C1311. Evil plotters against Truth are only too glad to get an opportunity of meddling from within with affairs which they want to spoil or upset.

They plot from outside, but they like to get into the inner circle, that their chances of intrigue may be all the greater. They are, however, unwilling to incur any danger or any self-sacrifice. Their whole activities are directed to mischief.

Great wisdom is required in a leader to deal with such a situation, and the best of such leaders must need divine guidance, as was forthcoming in this case.

وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَقُولُ ائْذَن لِّي وَلاَ تَفْتِنِّي ...

49. Among them is (many) a man who says:

"Grant me exemption and draw me not into trial."

C1312. Fitnahl, as explained in n. 1198, 8:25, may mean either trial or temptation, or else tumult, turmoil, or sedition.

The Commentators here take the former meaning, and explain that some Hypocrites claimed exemption from service in the Tabuk expedition in the direction of Syria on the plea that they could not withstand the charms of Syrian women and ought best to stay at home. The answer is:

"But you have already fallen into temptation here by refusing service and disobeying the call."

But perhaps the other meaning of "turmoil" may also be permissible as a secondary echo; in that case they object to be drawn into the turmoil of war, but they are told that they arc already in a moral turmoil in advancing a disingenuous plea.

In using the English word "trial" in the translation, I have also had in my mind the two shades of meaning associated with that word in English.

...أَلاَ فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُواْ...

Have they not fallen into trial already?

...وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ (٤٩)

And indeed hell surrounds the unbelievers (on all sides).

... إِن تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ

50. If good befalls thee, it grieves them;

...وَإِن تُصِبْكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُواْ قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرَنَا مِن قَبْلُ...

but if a misfortune befalls thee, they say,

"We took indeed our precautions beforehand,"

...وَيَتَوَلَّواْ وَّهُمْ فَرِحُونَ (٥٠)

and they turn away rejoicing.

...قُل لَّن يُصِيبَنَا إِلاَّ مَا كَتَبَ اللّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلاَنَا...

51. Say: "Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our Protector":

...وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (٥١)

and on Allah let the believers put their trust.

...قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَا إِلاَّ إِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ...

52. Say:

"Can you expect for us (any fate) other than one of two glorious things (martyrdom or victory)?

...وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ أَن يُصِيبَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِندِهِ أَوْ بِأَيْدِينَا...

But we can expect for you either that Allah will send His punishment from Himself, or by our hands.

...فَتَرَبَّصُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُم مُّتَرَبِّصُونَ (٥٢)

So wait (expectant); we too will wait with you."

C1313. The waiting of the Unbelievers and that of the Believers are in different senses.

The Unbelievers wish for disaster to the Believers, but the Believers will either conquer or die as martyrs in the Cause, in either case happy in the issue.

The Believers expect punishment for the Unbelievers for their infidelity, either through their own instrumentality, or in some other way in Allah's Plan, and the Unbelievers would not like it in either case.

Cf. 6:158.

... قُلْ أَنفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَّن يُتَقَبَّلَ مِنكُمْ

53. Say:

"Spend (for the cause) willingly or unwillingly: not from you will it be accepted:

C1314. The Hypocrites, who secretly plotted against Islam, might sometimes (and they did) make a show of making some contribution to the Cause in order to keep up their pretence.

Their contributions were not acceptable, whether they seemed to give willingly or unwillingly, because rebellion and disobedience were in their hearts. Three reasons are specifically given for their rejection, in the next verse:

1. they did not believe;
2. their prayers were not earnest, but for mere show: and
3. in reality their hearts were not behind the contributions which they offered.

Nothing is acceptable to Allah which does not proceed from a pure and sincere heart.

...إِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٥٣)

for ye are indeed a people rebellious and wicked."

...وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَن تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَاتُهُمْ إِلاَّ أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُواْ بِاللّهِ وَبِرَسُولِهِ

54. The only reasons why their contributions are not accepted are:

- that they reject Allah and His Messenger;

...وَلاَ يَأْتُونَ الصَّلاَةَ إِلاَّ وَهُمْ كُسَالَى

- that they come to prayer without earnestness;

...وَلاَ يُنفِقُونَ إِلاَّ وَهُمْ كَارِهُونَ (٥٤)

- and that they offer contributions unwillingly.

...فَلاَ تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلاَ أَوْلاَدُهُمْ

55. Let not their wealth nor their (following in) sons dazzle thee:

C1315. If they appeared to be prosperous, with their purses and their quivers full (metaphorically), they were not to be envied. In reality their wealth and their sons might themselves be a snare: Cf. 8:28.

On this particular occasion this was proved to the hilt. The wealth of the Pagans filled them with pride, darkened their understanding, and led to their destruction. Their sons and followers adopted the Faith which their fathers had fought against, much to the chagrin of the fathers, whose spiritual death was even worse than their discomfiture in this world.

...إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُم بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

in reality Allah's plan is to punish them with these things in this life

C1316. Cf. 3:176-178.

...وَتَزْهَقَ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٥٥)

and that their souls may perish in their (very) denial of Allah.

وَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللّهِ إِنَّهُمْ لَمِنكُمْ...

56. They swear by Allah that they are indeed of you;

...وَمَا هُم مِّنكُمْ وَلَـكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرَقُونَ (٥٦)

but they are not of you; yet they are afraid (to appear in their true colors).

لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغَارَاتٍ أَوْ مُدَّخَلاً لَّوَلَّوْاْ إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ (٥٧)

57. If they could find a place to flee to, or caves, or a place of concealment, they would turn straightway thereto, with an obstinate rush.

C1317. Jamaha: to be ungovernable, to run like a runaway horse, to rush madly and obstinately.

وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ...

58. And among them are men who slander thee in the matter of (the distribution of) the alms.

C1318. Sadaqah: aims that which is given in Allah's name, mainly to the poor and needy, and for the cognate purposes specified in the next verse but one:

Zakah is the regular and obligatory charity in an organized Muslim community, usually 2 1/2 per cent, of merchandise and 10 per cent, on the fruits of the earth. There is a vast body of literature on this subject. The main points may be studied in the *Hidaya filfuru* of Sheikh Burhan ud din Ali.

As against Zakah the term sadaqah has a much wider connotation, and is inclusive of Zakah as in the verse 60 of this Surah. (R).

...فَإِنْ أُعْطُواْ مِنْهَا رَضُواْ وَإِن لَّمْ يُعْطَوْاْ مِنهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسْخَطُونَ (٥٨)

If they are given part thereof, they are pleased, but if not, behold! they are indignant!

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُواْ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ...

59. If only they had been content with what Allah and His Messenger gave them,

...وَقَالُواْ حَسْبُنَا اللّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ...

and had said,

"Sufficient unto us is Allah! Allah and His Messenger will soon give us of His bounty:

...إِنَّا إِلَى اللّهِ رَاغِبُونَ (٥٩)

to Allah do we turn our hopes!"

(That would have been the right course.)

C1319. Selfish men think that charitable funds are fair game for raids, but the Islamic standards on this subject are very high. The enforcement of such standards is always unpopular, and even the Holy Prophet was subjected to obloquy and slander for his strictness to principle.

In doubtful cases, claimants who are disappointed should not blame the principles or those who enforce them, but put their trust in Allah, whose bounties are unbounded, and are given to all, whether rich or poor, according to their needs and their deserts. For every one it is excellent advice to say: deserve before you desire.

Section 8

...إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاء وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا

60. Alms are for

- the poor and the needy,
- and those employed to administer the (funds);

...وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ...

- for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to truth);
- for those in bondage and in debt;
- in the Cause of Allah;
- and for the wayfarer:

C1320. Alms or charitable gifts are to be given to the poor and the needy and those who are employed in their

service. That is, charitable, funds are not to be diverted to other uses, but the genuine expenses of administering charity are properly chargeable to such funds.

Who are the needy?

Besides the ordinary indigent, there are certain classes of people whose need is great and should be relieved. Those mentioned here are:

1. men who have been weaned from hostility to Truth, who would probably be persecuted by their former associates, and require assistance until they establish new connections in their new environment:
2. those in bondage, literally and figuratively:

   captives of war must be redeemed:

   slaves should be helped to freedom-,

   those in the bondage of ignorance or superstition or unfavorable environment should be helped to freedom to develop their own gifts:
3. those who are held in the grip of debt should be helped to economic freedom:
4. those who are struggling and striving in Allah's Cause by teaching or fighting or in duties assigned to them by the Islamic State, who are thus unable to earn their ordinary living: and
5. strangers stranded on the way.

All these have a claim to charity. They should be relieved by individual or organized effort, but in a responsible way.

In this verse, the word sadaqah refers to obligatory charity (Zakah).

See n. 1318 above. (R).

فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٠)...

(thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُذُنٌ...

61. Among them are men who molest the Prophet and say,

"He is (all) ear."

C1321. The assonance of the Arabic words "Yu'dhuna" and "udhnun" is of course lost in the Translation. But the sense remains.

Detractors of the Prophet said. "O! he listens to everybody!"

"Yes," is the answer,

"he listens for their good: he is a mercy and a blessing to all men of Faith, but specially to you (who are addressed)."

The general statement is emphasised for the particular people addressed.

قُلْ أُذُنُ خَيْرٍ لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

Say, "He listens to what is best for you; he believes in Allah, has faith in the believers,

...وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مِنكُمْ...

and is a Mercy to those of you who believe":

...وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ رَسُولَ اللّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٦١)

but those who molest the Prophet will have a grievous penalty.

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللّهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضُوكُمْ...

62. To you they swear by Allah. In order to please you:

...وَاللّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَقُّ أَن يُرْضُوهُ إِن كَانُواْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٢)

but it is more fitting that they should please Allah and His Messenger if they are believers.

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُواْ أَنَّهُ مَن يُحَادِدِ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَأَنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا...

63. Know they not that for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, is the fire of Hell? --

wherein they shall dwell.

...ذَٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيمُ (٦٣)

That is the supreme disgrace.

يَحْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَن تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ...

64. The Hypocrites are afraid lest a Surah should be sent down about them, showing them what is (really passing) in their hearts.

C1322. The dissection of the motives of the Hypocrites alarmed them. For it meant that they would fail in their policy of having the best of both worlds and undermining the loyalty of the weaker members of the Muslim community. So they turn it off as a jest. But they are sharply rebuked:

"Can you make such solemn matters subjects of playful jokes? Fie upon you! You are found out, and your guile is of no effect." (R).

...قُلِ اسْتَهْزِئُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُونَ (٦٤)

Say: "Mock ye! but verily Allah will bring to light all that ye fear (should be revealed)."

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ...

65. If thou dost question them, they declare (with emphasis):

"We were only talking idly and in play."

...قُلْ أَبِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (٦٥)

Say: "Was it at Allah, and His signs, and His Messenger, that ye were mocking?"

لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُم بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ...

66. Make ye no excuses:

ye have rejected faith after ye had accepted it.

...إِن نَّعْفُ عَن طَائِفَةٍ مِّنكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَائِفَةً بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ (٦٦)

If We pardon some of you, We will punish others amongst you,

for that they are in sin.

C1323. See last note.

Hypocrisy is a half-way house, a state of indecision in the choice between good and evil.

- Those who definitely range themselves with good obtain forgiveness:
- those who pass definitely to evil suffer the penalties of evil.

Section 9

الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُم مِّن بَعْضٍ...

67. The Hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other:

C1324. Literally, "the Hypocrites... are of each other".

The forms of hypocrisy may vary, but they are all alike, and they understand each other's hypocrisy. They hold together.

...يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ...

they enjoin evil, and forbid what in just, and are close with their hands.

C1325. The English phrase "close-fisted" would cover only a part of the meaning.

The hand is the symbol of power, help, and assistance. This may be financial, or it may be in other ways.

The Hypocrites pretend a great deal, but are of no use or real help to any one.

...نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ...

They have forgotten Allah; so He hath forgotten them.

C1326. Cf. 7:51. and n. 1029.

They ignore Allah: and Allah will ignore them.

...إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٦٧)

Verily the Hypocrites are rebellious and perverse.

وَعَدَ اللهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

68. Allah hath promised the Hypocrites, men and women, and the rejecters of faith, the fire of hell:

therein shall they dwell:

...هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ...

sufficient is it for them:

...وَلَعَنَهُمُ اللهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٦٨)

for them is the curse of Allah, and an enduring punishment,

C1327. "Curse," here as elsewhere, is deprivation of grace and mercy, brought about by the rejection of Allah by the Unbelievers.

كَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنكُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ أَمْوَالاً وَأَوْلاَدًا...

69. As in the case of those before you:

they were mightier than you in power and more flourishing in wealth and children.

...فَاسْتَمْتَعُوا بِخَلاَقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِخَلاَقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِينَ مِن

...قَبْلِكُمْ

They had their enjoyment of their portion: and ye have of yours, as did those before you;

...بِخَلاَقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا...

and ye indulge in idle talk as they did.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الُّدنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ...

They! their works are fruitless in this world and in the hereafter,

...وَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٦٩)

and they will lose (all spiritual good).

أَلَمْ يَأْتِهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ...

70. Hath not the story reached them of those before them?

The people of Noah, and Ad, and Thamud;

C1328. The story:

- of Noah is told in 7:59-64:
- of 'Ad in 7:65-72; and
- of Thamud in 7:73-79;
- of Abraham in numerous places, but see specially 6:74-82;
- of Midianites in 7:85-93; and
- of Lut and the Cities of the Plain overthrown for their wickedness, in 7:80-84.

...وَقَوْمِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَصْحَابِ مَدْيَنَ ...

the people of Abraham,

the men of Madyan,

C1329. In the case of Noah and Abraham, the word I have translated as "people of..." is **qaum**:

these prophets were messengers each to his own people or nation, as was also Hud to the 'Ad people and Salih to the Thamud people.

The word used for the Midianites is Ashabi Madyan, which I have translated "men of Midian" for want of a better word.

The Midianites were for the greater part of their history nomads, with pasture grounds but no settled territory or town. The town of Madyan on the Gulf of 'Aqaba refers to much later times when the Midianites as a people had ceased to count.

See n. 1053 to 7:85.

... وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتِ...

and the cities overthrown.

C1330. The Cities of Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, to whom Lut preached in vain to desist from their abominations: 7:80-84.

...أَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ...

To them came their Messengers with clear signs.

...فَمَا كَانَ اللّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَـكِن كَانُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٧٠)

It is not Allah who wrongs them, but they wrong their own souls.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاء بَعْضٍ...

71. The believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another:

...يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ...

- they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil:

...وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاَةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

- they observe regular prayers,
- practice regular charity,
- and obey Allah and His Messenger.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللّهُ إِنَّ اللّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٧١)

On them will Allah pour His mercy:
for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.

وَعَدَ اللّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

72. Allah hath promised to believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein,

...وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ ...

and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss.

...وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ أَكْبَرُ...

But the greatest bliss in the Good Pleasure of Allah:

...ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٧٢)

that is the supreme felicity.

C.96 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:73-99)

The hardest striving and fighting are needed
To combat evil and hypocrisy; for sin
Can reach a stage when the doors of forgiveness
Are closed. The good must shun all evil
As unclean, and gladly welcome all chance
Of service and sacrifice, as bringing them closer
To the Presence and Mercy of Allah.

Section 10

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ...

73. O Prophet!
strive hard against the unbelievers and the Hypocrites,
and be firm against them.

...وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٧٣)

Their abode is hell,
an evil refuge indeed.

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا...

74. They swear by Allah that they said nothing (evil),

...كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوا بِمَا لَمْ يَنَالُوا...

but indeed they uttered blasphemy, and they did it after accepting Islam;
and they meditated a plot which they were enable to carry out:

C1331. The reference is to a plot made by the Prophet's enemies to kill him when he was returning from Tabuk. The plot failed.

It was all the more dastardly in that some of the conspirators were among the men of Madinah who were

enriched by the general prosperity that followed the peace and good government established through Islam in Madinah. Trade flourished: justice was firmly administered with an even hand. And the only return that these men could make was a return of evil for good. That was their revenge, because Islam aimed at suppressing selfishness, stood for the rights of the poorest and humblest, and judged worth by righteousness rather than by birth or position.

...وَمَا نَقَمُواْ إِلاَّ أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

this revenge of theirs was (their) only return for the bounty with which Allah and His Messenger had enriched them!

...فَإِن يَتُوبُواْ يَكُ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ...

If they repent, it will be best for them;

...وَإِن يَتَوَلَّوْاْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ...

but if they turn back (to their evil ways), Allah will punish them with a grievous penalty in this life and in the hereafter:

...وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ نَصِيرٍ (٧٤)

they shall have none on earth to protect or help them.

وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ عَاهَدَ اللّهَ لَئِنْ آتَانَا مِن فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ...

75. Amongst them are men who made a Covenant with Allah that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity,

...وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٧٥)

and be truly amongst those who are righteous.

فَلَمَّا آتَاهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُواْ بِهِ وَتَوَلَّواْ وَّهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ (٧٦)

76. But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became covetous, and turned back (from their Covenant), averse (from its fulfillment).

فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُواْ اللّهَ...

77. So He hath put as a consequence hypocrisy into their hearts, (to last) till the day whereon they shall meet Him:

C1332. If men are false to their covenants and words, the natural consequence will be hypocrisy to cover their falsehood. Such consequences will last till the Day of Judgment, when they will have to account for their deeds.

They may think that they are deceiving men by their hypocrisy, but they cannot deceive Allah, to Whom all their most secret thoughts and plots and doings are known.

...مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ (٧٧)

because they broke their Covenant with Allah, and because they lied (again and again).

...أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ

78. Know they not that Allah doth know their secret (thoughts) and their secret counsels,

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (٧٨)

and that Allah knoweth well all things unseen?

...الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ

79. Those who slander such of the believers as give themselves freely to (deeds of) charity,

...وَالَّذِينَ لاَ يَجِدُونَ إِلاَّ جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ

as well as such as can find nothing to give except the fruits of their labor, and throw ridicule on them,

C1333. When financial help is necessary for the Cause, every Muslim contributes what he can. Those who can afford large sums are proud to bring them in of their own free-will, and those who are very poor contribute their mite or their labour.

Both kinds of gifts are equally precious because of the faith and good-will behind them, and only cynics will laugh at the scantiness of the one or the lavishness of the other.

Sometimes they not only laugh, but attribute wrong motives to the givers. Such conduct is here reprimanded.

...سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٧٩)

Allah will throw back their ridicule on them:

and they shall have a grievous penalty.

اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لاَ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِن تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ...

80. Whether thou ask for their forgiveness or not, (their sin is unforgivable):

...سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ...

if thou ask seventy times for their forgiveness, Allah will not forgive them:

C1334. An awful warning for those who actively oppose the Cause of Allah.

The Holy Prophet was by nature full of mercy and forgiveness. He prayed for his enemies. But in such a case even his prayers are nullified by their attitude of rejecting Allah.

...ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُواْ بِاللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ...

because they have rejected Allah and His Messenger;

...وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٨٠)

and Allah guideth not those who are perversely rebellious.

Section 11

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خِلاَفَ رَسُولِ اللّهِ...

81. Those who were left behind (in the Tabuk expedition) rejoiced in their inaction behind the back of the Messenger of Allah:

...وَكَرِهُواْ أَن يُجَاهِدُواْ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَقَالُواْ لاَ تَنفِرُواْ

فِي الْحَرِّ...

they hated to strive and fight, with their goods and their persons, in the Cause of Allah: they said,

"Go not forth in the heat."

C1335. The Tabuk expedition had to be undertaken hurriedly in the heat of summer, because of a threat or fear of Byzantine invasion. They marched from Madinah about the month of September or October in the solar calendar.

...قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا لَّوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ (٨١)

Say,

"The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat."

If only they could understand!

... فَلْيَضْحَكُوا قَلِيلاً وَلْيَبْكُوا كَثِيرًا

82. Let them laugh a little: much will they weep:

C1336. They may sneer or ridicule or rejoice now: that will be only for a little: much will they have to weep for afterwards.

... جَزَاء بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٨٢)

a recompense for the (evil) that they do.

...فَإِن رَّجَعَكَ اللّهُ إِلَى طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ

83. If, then, Allah bring thee back to any of them, and they ask thy permission to come out (with thee),

...فَقُل لَّن تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَن تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا

say:

"Never shall ye come out with me, nor fight an enemy with me:

...إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُم بِالْقُعُودِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْخَالِفِينَ (٨٣)

for ye preferred to sit inactive on the first occasion:

then sit ye (now) with those who lag behind."

...وَلاَ تُصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُم مَّاتَ أَبَدًا وَلاَ تَقُمْ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ

84. Nor do thou ever pray for any of them that dies, nor stand at his grave:

C1337. On the death of a Muslim, it is the pious duty of every neighbouring Muslim who can, to assist in the simple funeral ceremonies, -the prayer for mercy before the body is consigned to the grave, and the consignment of the body to the grave, by a simple, solemn, and dignified ritual.

For those who have shown hostility to Islam, this would not be seemly and is forbidden. (R).

...إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُواْ بِاللّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُواْ وَهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٨٤)

for they rejected Allah and His Messenger, and died in a state of perverse rebellion.

...وَلاَ تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلاَدُهُمْ

85. Nor let their wealth nor their (following in) sons Dazzle thee:

...إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللّهُ أَن يُعَذِّبَهُم بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٨٥)

Allah's plan is to punish them with these things in this world, and that their souls may perish in their (very) denial of Allah.

C1338. Except for the omission of a single word ("life"), this verse repeats verse 55 above. But the repetition indicates the harmonious closing of the same argument in two aspects.

- In 9:55 it occurred in connection with the reasons for refusing to receive the contributions of such persons to the expenses of an enterprise which though vital to Islam's defence was secretly opposed by such persons.
- Here (in 9:85) it is a question of refusing to participate in the obsequies of such persons after their death: it is natural to omit the word "life" in this case.

...وَإِذَآ أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ أَنْ آمِنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَجَاهِدُواْ مَعَ رَسُولِهِ

86. When a Surah comes down, enjoining them to believe in Allah and to strive and fight along with his Messenger,

...اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُوْلُواْ الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُواْ ذَرْنَا نَكُن مَّعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ (٨٦)

those with wealth and influence among them ask thee for exemption, and say:

"Leave us (behind): we would be with those who sit (at home)."

...رَضُواْ بِأَن يَكُونُواْ مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ

87. They prefer to be with (the women), who remain behind (at home):

C1339. Khawalif, plural of Khalifah, those (feminine) who remain behind at home when the men go to war: women. There is a stinging taunt in this, a suggestion that such men were cowards, preferring to remain behind like women when stiff work was to be done by men in defending their homes.

They were not only cowards, but fools: as they did not understand their own best interests. If the enemy got the better of their brethren, they would themselves be crushed.

"Their hearts are sealed": the habits of cowardice and hypocrisy which they have adopted have become their second nature.

...وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يَفْقَهُونَ (٨٧)

their hearts are sealed and so they understand not.

...لَـكِنِ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَعَهُ جَاهَدُواْ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ

88. But the Messenger, and those who believe with him, strive and fight with their wealth and their persons:

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ ...

for them are (all) good things:

C1340. "Good things," and "prosperity," are to be understood both in the physical and in the highest spiritual sense as the next verse makes clear.

... وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٨٨)

and it is they who will prosper.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

89. Allah hath prepared for them gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein:

...ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٨٩)

that is the supreme felicity.

C1341. In this verse there is a reminiscence, but not an exact repetition, of verse 72 above. This balances the parallel repetition or reminiscence in verse 85 above. See n. 1338.

The symmetry of the argument is thus completed, as regards the Hypocrites of Madinah before we pass on to consider the case of the Hypocrites among the desert Bedouins in section 12.

Section 12

وَجَاء الْمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ الأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ...

90. And there were, among the desert Arabs (also), Men who made excuses and came to claim exemption;

...وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُواْ اللّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

and those who were false to Allah and His Messenger (merely) sat inactive.

C1342. Not only had the Hypocrites a nest in Madinah, but their tactics affected some of the village or desert Bedouins, who loved war and would have followed a standard of war even if no question of Faith or a sacred Cause was involved.

But some of them, though professing Islam, were frightened by the hardships of the Tabuk expedition and the prospect of meeting the trained armies of the great Roman (Byzantine) Empire. They made all sorts of lying excuses, but really their want of faith made them ineligible for being enlisted in a sacred Cause, in the terms of 9:46-47 and 9:53-54. Some came to make

excuses: other did not even come , but sat at home, ignoring the summons.

...سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٩٠)

Soon will a grievous penalty seize the unbelievers among them.

لَّيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاء وَلاَ عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلاَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لاَ يَجِدُونَ

مَا يُنفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ ...

91. There is no blame on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend (on the cause),

C1343. Though active service in person or by contributing resources is expected in emergencies of every person who believes in the Cause, there are some who must necessarily be exempted without the least blame attaching to them.

Such would be those who are weak in body on account of age, sex, infirmity, or illness. Personal service in their case is out of the question, but they could contribute towards expenses if they are able. But if they are too poor to afford even such assistance, they are excused. But in all cases the motive must be sincere, and there should be a desire to serve and do such duty as they can.

With such motives people are doing good or right in whatever form they express their service: sometimes, in Milton's words, "they also serve who only stand and wait."

In any case their purity of motive would get Allah's grace and forgiveness, and we must not criticize even if we thought they might have done more.

... إِذَا نَصَحُواْ لِلّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ...

if they are sincere (in duty) to Allah and His Messenger:

... مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِن سَبِيلٍ...

no ground (of complaint) can there be against such as do right:

... وَاللّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٩١)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَلاَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا أَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ...

92. Nor (is there blame) on those who came to thee to be provided with mounts,

C1344. Hamala, yahmilu, here seems to mean: to provide means of transport, viz., mounts (horses, camels, etc.) for riding, and perhaps beasts of burden for carrying equipment and baggage, suitable to the rank of those concerned.

It may possibly mean other facilities for getting about, such as boots and shoes, or provisions: for an army's march depends upon all these things.

Where people fight as volunteers for a cause, without an extensive war fund, those who can afford it provide such things for themselves, but those without means, yet anxious to serve, have to be left behind. Their disappointment is in proportion to their eagerness to serve.

... قُلْتَ لاَ أَجِدُ مَا أَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ ...

and when thou saidst, "I can find no mounts for you,"

... تَوَلَّواْ وَّأَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا أَلاَّ يَجِدُواْ مَا يُنفِقُونَ (٩٢)

they turned back,

their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses.

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاء...

93. The ground (of complaint) is against such as claim exemption while they are rich.

... رَضُواْ بِأَن يَكُونُواْ مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ ...

They prefer to stay with the (women) who remain behind:

... وَطَبَعَ اللّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٩٣)

Allah hath sealed their hearts; so they know not (what they miss).

C1345. Cf. 9:87, where similar phrases are used for a similar shirking of duty by towns-folk, while here we are considering the desert folk.

It is not only a duty, but a precious privilege, to serve a great Cause by personal self-sacrifice. Those who shirk such an opportunity know not what they miss.

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ...

94. They will present their excuses to you when ye return to them.

... قُل لاَّ تَعْتَذِرُواْ لَن نُّؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّأَنَا اللّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ...

Say thou:

"Present no excuses: we shall not believe you:

Allah hath already informed us of the true state of matters concerning you:

... وَسَيَرَى اللّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ...

it is your actions that Allah and His Messenger will observe:

... ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ...

in the end will ye be brought back to Him who knoweth what is hidden and what is open:

... فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٤)

then will He show you the truth of all that ye did.

سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لِتُعْرِضُواْ عَنْهُمْ ...

95. They will swear to you by Allah, when ye return to them, that ye may leave them alone.

... فَأَعْرِضُواْ عَنْهُمْ ...

So leave them alone:

... إِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ ...

For they are an abomination,

... وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ جَزَاء بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْسِبُونَ (٩٥)

and Hell is their dwelling place, a fitting recompense for the (evil) that they did.

يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْاْ عَنْهُمْ فَإِن تَرْضَوْاْ عَنْهُمْ ...

96. They will swear unto you, that ye may be pleased with them

... فَإِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَرْضَى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٩٦)

but if ye are pleased with them, Allah is not pleased with those who disobey.

الأعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلاَّ يَعْلَمُواْ حُدُودَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ...

97. The Arabs of the desert are the worst in unbelief and hypocrisy, and most fitted to be in ignorance of the command which Allah hath sent down to His Messenger:

... وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٩٧)

but Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَمِنَ الأعْرَابِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَائِرَ...

98. Some of the desert Arabs Look upon their payments as a fine, and watch for disasters for you:

C1346. The payments refer to the regular Charity established by Islam-the obligatory alms. If you look upon them as a fine or a burden, their virtue is lost.

If you rejoice that you have there an opportunity of helping the Community to maintain its standards of public assistance and to suppress the unseemly beggary and loathsome importunity whose relief is only governed by motives of getting rid of awkward obstacles on the way, then your outlook is entirely different. You wish for organized and effective efforts to solve the problems of human poverty and misery.

In doing so, you get nearer to Allah, and you earn the good wishes and prayers of godly men, led by our Holy Leader Mustafa.

... عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَاللّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٩٨)

on them be the disaster of evil:

for Allah is He that heareth and knoweth (all things).

وَمِنَ الأعْرَابِ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ...

99. But some of the desert Arabs believe in Allah and the Last Day,

... وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنفِقُ قُرُبَاتٍ عِندَ اللّهِ وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ...

and look on their payments as pious gifts bringing them nearer to Allah and obtaining the prayers of the Messenger.

... أَلا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَّهُمْ ...

Aye, indeed they bring them nearer (to Him):

... سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ...

soon will Allah admit them to His Mercy:

C1347. The Mercy of Allah is always present, as the sun is always shining. But when we have prepared ourselves to receive it, we come to the full enjoyment of it, as a man who was in a shade comes out by his effort into the open, and basks in sunshine.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٩٩)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C.97 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:100-118)

The vanguard of Faith think nothing
Of self-sacrifice. Their reward is God's
Good Pleasure. Even those who do wrong

But repent will obtain His Mercy: not so
Those who persist in Unfaith, Hypocrisy
And Mischief. Allah's grace is free and abounding
For the righteous. Even if they waver
Or fail, He will turn to them in Mercy,
If only they repent and come back unto Him.

Section 13

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالأَنصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ...

100. The vanguard (of Islam) -- the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds,

C1348. The **vanguard** of Islam-those in the first rank-are those who dare and suffer for the Cause and never flinch. The first historical examples are the Muhajirs and the Ansar.

- The Muhajirs-those who forsook their homes in Makkah and migrated to Madinah, the Holy Prophet being among the last to leave the post of danger, are mentioned first.
- Then come the Ansar, the Helpers, the citizens of Madinah who invited them, welcomed them, and gave them aid, and who formed the pivot of the new Community.
- Then are mentioned all who follow them in good deeds: not only the early heroes and ordinary men and women who had been Companions of the Prophet or had seen him, but men and women in all ages who have lived noble lives.

In spite of all their sacrifice and suffering they rejoice in the precious gift of the Good Pleasure of Allah, and their Salvation is the Supreme Felicity which such Good Pleasure gives, symbolized by the Gardens of Heaven.

... رَّضِيَ اللّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُواْ عَنْهُ...

well pleased is Allah with them, as are they with him:

... وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

for them hath He prepared gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever:

... ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٠٠)

that is the supreme felicity.

C1349. Note the description of the final accomplishment of the destiny of man. In mathematical science it would be like a letter or formula which would sum up a long course of reasoning.

In this very Surah it occurs before in 9:72 and 9:89, where see n. 1341. (R).

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الأَعْرَابِ مُنَافِقُونَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ...

101. Certain of the desert Arabs round about you are hypocrites, as well as (desert Arabs) among the Medina folk:

C1350. The desert Arabs were not all simple folk. There were cunning hypocrites among them: both among certain tribes encamped round about Madinah and certain others in Madinah itself.

I understand that both groups are of the Arab, to whom the context refers, and not of the settled citizens of Madinah, whose Hypocrites were already referred to in previous sections. They might look simple, but they were, in their ignorance, all the more obstinate and hypocritical.

... مَرَدُواْ عَلَى النِّفَاقِ لاَ تَعْلَمُهُمْ ...

they are obstinate in hypocrisy: thou knowest them not:

... نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ...

We know them:

... سَنُعَذِّبُهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٠١)

twice shall We punish them and in addition shall they be sent to a grievous penalty.

C1351. Their punishment in this world was double, viz., not only in their discomfiture, but because in their obstinate ignorance, they failed to understand the accomplished facts, while cleverer men realized that their hostility to Islam was hopeless.

In addition to their discomfiture in this life, they would have to meet the penalties to come.

وَآخَرُونَ اعْتَرَفُواْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُواْ عَمَلاً صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا...

102. Others (there are who) have acknowledged their wrongdoings:

they have mixed an act that was good with another that was evil.

C1352. There were some whose will was weak and succumbed to evil, although there was much good in them. To them is held out the promise of forgiveness if they would repent and undertake all acts of Muslim charity, which would purify their souls, aided by the prayers of Allah's Messenger. Then would they get the Peace that comes from purity and right conduct.

... عَسَى اللّهُ أن يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ...

Perhaps Allah will turn unto them (in mercy):

... إِنَّ اللّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٠٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِم بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

103. Of their goods take alms, that so thou mightest purify and sanctify them;

and pray on their behalf.

... إِنَّ صَلاَتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَّهُمْ ...

Verily thy prayers are a source of security for them:

... وَاللّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٠٣)

and Allah is One who heareth and knoweth.

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ...

104. Know they not that Allah doth accept repentance from His votaries and receives their gifts of charity,

... وَأَنَّ اللّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٠٤)

and that Allah is verily He, the Oft-Returning, Most-Merciful?

... وَقُلِ اعْمَلُواْ

105. And say:

"Work (righteousness):

C1353. The repentant should be encouraged, after their repentance, to amend their conduct. The kindly interest of their brethren in them will strengthen them in virtue and blot out their past. When they go back into Eternity, they will understand the healing grace which saved them, just as the evil ones will then have their eyes opened to the real truth of their spiritual degradation (9:94). The similar words, in verse 84 and here, clench the contrast.

... فَسَيَرَى اللّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ...

soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the believers:

... وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ...

soon will ye be brought back to the knower of what is hidden and what is open:

... فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٠٥)

then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."

وَآخَرُونَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِأَمْرِ اللّهِ إِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَإِمَّا يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ...

106. There are (yet) others, held in suspense for the command of Allah, whether He will punish them, or turn in mercy to them:

C1354. Three categories of men are mentioned, whose faith was tested and found wanting in the Tabuk affair, but their characteristics are perfectly general, and we may here consider them in their general aspects:

1. the deep-dyed hypocrites, who when found out make excuses because otherwise they will suffer ignominy; they are unregenerate and obstinate, and there is no hope for them (9:101);
2. there are those who have lapsed into evil, but are not altogether evil; they repent and amend, and are accepted (9:102-105); and
3. there are doubtful cases, but Allah will judge them (9:106). A fourth category is mentioned in ix. 107, which will be discussed later.

... وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٠٦)

and Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُواْ مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

107. And there are those who put up a mosque by way of mischief and infidelity, to disunite the believers,

C1355. Three categories of Hypocrites having already been mentioned (n. 1354), a fourth class of insidious evil-doers is now mentioned, whose type is illustrated in the story of the Quba "Mosque of mischief (dirar)".

Quba is a suburb of Madinah about three miles to the south-east. When the Holy Prophet arrived at Madinah for Hijrah, he rested four days in Quba before entering the town of Madinah. Here was built the first mosque, the "Mosque of Piety" to which he frequently came during his subsequent stay in Madinah.

Taking advantage of these sacred associations, some Hypocrites of the Tribe of Bani Ghanam built an opposition mosque in Quba, pretending to advance Islam. In reality they were in league with a notorious enemy of Islam, one Abu 'Amir, who had fought against Islam at Uhud and who was now, after the battle of Hunain (A.H. 9), in Syria: his confederates wanted a mosque for him to come to, but it would only be a source of mischief and division, and the scheme was disapproved.

... وَإِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِن قَبْلُ...

and in preparation for one who warred against Allah and His Messenger aforetime.

C1356. Abu 'Amir, surnamed the Rahib (Monk), as he had been in touch with Christian monks.

See last note.

... وَلَيَحْلِفَنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلاَّ الْحُسْنَى...

They will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good;

... وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٠٧)

but Allah doth declare that they are certainly liars.

لاَ تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا...

108. Never stand thou forth therein.

... لَّمَسْجِدٌ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَى مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَن تَقُومَ فِيهِ ...

There is a mosque whose foundation was laid from the first day on piety; it is more worthy of thy standing forth (for prayer) therein.

C1357. The original "Mosque of Piety" built by the Holy Prophet himself.

... فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَن يَتَطَهَّرُواْ...

In it are men who love to be purified;

... وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِينَ (١٠٨)

and Allah loveth those who make themselves pure.

C1358. The true Muslim must be pure in body, mind, and heart. His motives should always be sincere, and his religion without any alloy of worldly gain.

أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَى تَقْوَى مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ...

109. Which then is best?

he that layeth his foundation on piety to Allah and His good pleasure?

... أم مَّنْ أسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىَ شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ ...

or he that layeth his foundation on an undermined sand-cliff ready to crumble to pieces?

C1359. A man who builds his life on Piety (which includes sincerity and the purity of all motives) and his hopes on the Good Pleasure of Allah, builds on a firm foundation of rock that will never be shaken. In contrast to him is the man who builds on a shifting sand-cliff on the brink of an abyss, already undermined by forces which he does not see.

The cliff and the foundations all crumble to pieces along with him, and he is plunged into the Fire of misery from which there is no escape.

... فَانْهَارَ بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ...

And it doth crumble to pieces with him, into the fire of Hell.

... وَاللّهُ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٠٩)

And Allah guideth not people that do wrong.

لاَ يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْاْ رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلاَّ أَن تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

110. The foundation of those who so build is never free from suspicion and shakiness in their hearts, until their hearts are cut to pieces.

C1360. The parable is continued further. The heart of man is the seat of his hopes and fears, the foundation of his moral and spiritual life. If that foundation is on an undermined sand-cliff already crumbling to pieces, what security or stability can he have?

He is being shaken by alarms and suspicions and superstitions, until like the edge of a sand-cliff they are cut clean away and fall into a heap of ruin and his spiritual life and all its land-marks are destroyed.

... وَاللّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (١١٠)

And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

إِنَّ اللّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الجَنَّةَ...

111. Allah hath purchased of the believers their persons and their good; for theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise):

C1361. In a human bargain both sides give something and receive some advantage. In the divine bargain of Allah with man, Allah takes man's will and soul and his wealth and goods, and gives him in return ever-lasting Felicity.

Man fights in Allah's Cause and carries out His will. All that he has to give up is the ephemeral things of this world, while he gains eternal salvation, the fulfilment of his highest spiritual hopes, -a supreme achievement indeed.

... يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ...

they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain:

... وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالإِنجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ...

a promise binding on Him in truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qur'án:

C1362. We offer our whole selves and our possessions to Allah, and Allah gives us Salvation. This is the true doctrine of redemption: and we are taught that this is the doctrine not only of the Quran but of the earlier Revelations, -the original Law of Moses and the original Gospel of Jesus.

Any other view of redemption is rejected by Islam, especially that of corrupted Christianity, which thinks that some other person suffered for our sins and we are redeemed by his blood. It is our self-surrender that counts, not other people's merits.

Our complete self-surrender may include fighting for the cause, both spiritual and physical. As regards actual fighting with the sword there has been some difference in theological theories at different times, but very little in the practice of those who framed those theories.

The Jewish wars were ruthless wars of extermination. The Old Testament does not mince matters on this subject. In the New Testament St. Paul, in commending the worthy fruits of Faith, mentions Gideon. Barak, and other warriors of the Old Testament as his ideals, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms... waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens..." (Hebrews, 11:32-34).

The monkish morality of the Gospels in their present form has never been followed by any self-respecting Christian or other nation in history. Nor is it common-sense to ignore lust of blood in unregenerate man as a form of evil which has to be combated "within the limits, set by Allah" (9:112). (R).

... وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللّهِ...

and who is more faithful to his Covenant than Allah?

... فَاسْتَبْشِرُواْ بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُم بِهِ...

Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded:

... وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١١١)

that is the achievement supreme.

... التَّائِبُونَ

112. - Those that turn (to Allah) in repentance:

C1363. We are to rejoice that by giving up such small things as ourselves and our possessions we are to be rewarded with such a great thing as the eternal life of felicity. The truly righteous, whose lives in various aspects are described in this verse, do so rejoice. The good news is to be proclaimed to all Believers, including the weakest among us, so that they may profit by that example.

... الْعَابِدُونَ الْحَامِدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ الرَّاكِعُونَ السَّاجِدونَ...

- that serve Him, and praise Him;
- that wander in devotion to the Cause of Allah;
- that bow down and prostrate themselves in prayer;

... الآمِرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ...

- that enjoin good and forbid evil;

وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ...

- and observe the limits set by Allah; (these do rejoice).

... وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١٢)

So proclaim the glad tidings to the Believers.

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَن يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولِي قُرْبَى...

113. It is not fitting, for the prophet and those who believe, that they should pray for forgiveness for pagans, even though they be of kin,

... مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (١١٣)

after it is clear to them that they are companions of the Fire.

C1364. This is usually understood to refer to the prayer for the dead,

- if they died unrepentant after Islam was preached to them,
- if they actively resisted or opposed the Faith to the last. And
- if the person praying knows that on account of deliberate contumacy the deceased may be said to have had the doors of mercy closed to him.

How is he to know?

The knowledge must come from special commands as declared by the Holy Prophet in his lifetime regarding individuals. Where no light is available from this source we must follow the best Judgement we can.

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلاَّ عَن مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ...

114. And Abraham prayed for his father's forgiveness only because of a promise he had made to him.

C1365. Abraham and his unbelieving father are referred to in 6:74.

Apparently when Abraham was convinced that the conditions mentioned in the last note applied to his father, he gave up praying for him, as the physical bond was cut off by the spiritual hostility. For the promise to pray for his father, see 19:47.

... فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّلّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ...

But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him:

... إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لأوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ (١١٤)

for Abraham was most tender-hearted, forbearing.

C1366. Abraham was loyal and tender-hearted, and bore with much that he disapproved, being in this a prototype of Al-Mustafa, and it must have gone against his grain to cut off relations in that way.

But it would obviously be wrong for a human being to entreat Allah for mercy on people who had finally rejected Allah.

وَمَا كَانَ اللّهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَاهُمْ حَتَّى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُم مَّا يَتَّقُونَ...

115. And Allah will not **mislead** a people after He hath guided them, in order that He may make clear to them what to fear (and avoid) --

C1367. Allah's clear commands are given, so that Believers may not be misled by their human frailty into unbecoming conduct.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١١٥)

for Allah hath knowledge of all things.

إِنَّ اللّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ يُحْيِـي وَيُمِيتُ...

116. Unto Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He giveth life and He taketh it.

... وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ نَصِيرٍ (١١٦)

Except for Him ye have no protector nor helper.

لَقَد تَّابَ اللهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالأنصَارِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ...

117. Allah turned with favor to the Prophet, the Muhajirs, and the Ansar, who followed Him in a time of distress,

C1368. Cf. 9:100.

The Muhajirs were the people who originally forsook their homes in Makkah and followed Al-Mustafa in exile to Madinah.

The Ansar were the Madinah people who received them with honour and hospitality into their city.

Both these groups were staunch supporters of Islam, and proved their Faith by great sacrifices. But in the difficult days of the Tabuk expedition some of them, not perversely, but out of lethargy and human weakness, had failed to follow the standard. They were forgiven, and they afterwards acquitted themselves with zeal

... مِن بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ...

after that the hearts of a part of them had nearly swerved (from duty);

C1369. Note that the "swerving from duty" was merely an inclination due to the weakness of human nature in the face of new difficulties: that it only affected a part of the men for a time: and that it was overcome even in their case by the grace of Allah, so that they all did their duty, and were freely forgiven their incipient weakness, which they conquered.

There were three exceptions, which are referred to in the next verse.

... ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ...

but He turned to them (also):

... إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١١٧)

for He is unto them Most Kind, Most Merciful.

وَعَلَى الثَّلاَثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِّفُواْ...

118. (He turned in mercy also) to the three who were left Behind: (they felt guilty)

... حَتَّى إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ...

to such a degree that the earth seemed constrained to them, for all its speciousness

C1370.

- Among the Faithful, the largest number consisted of those who were perfectly staunch and ever ready to do their duty. They obtained the love and good pleasure of Allah.
- Next came a few who wavered because their will was weak and they were daunted by the dangers and difficulties that faced them; Allah's saving grace protected them and they conquered their weakness, and did not fail in their duty; Allah forgave them and accepted their repentance.
- Lastly, in the illustration taken from the Tabuk affair, there were some who actually failed in their duty, not from contumacy or ill-will, but from thoughtlessness, slackness, and human weakness: they actually failed to obey the Holy Prophet's summons, and were naturally called on to explain, and were excluded from the life of the Community.

  Their mental state is here described graphically. Though the earth is spacious, to them it was constrained. In their own souls they had a feeling of constraint. In worldly affluence they felt poor in spirit.

They realized that they could not flee from Allah, but could only find solace and refuge in coming back to Him. They freely repented and showed it in their deeds, and Allah freely forgave them and took them to His grace.

Though illustrated by the particular examples of Ka'b, Mararah and Hilal, the lesson is perfectly general and is good for all times.

... وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّواْ أَن لاَّ مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللّهِ إِلاَّ إِلَيْهِ ...

and their (very) souls seemed straitened to them, and they perceived that there is no fleeing from Allah and no refuge but to Himself.

... ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُواْ...

Then He turned to them, that they might repent:

... إِنَّ اللّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (١١٨)

for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

C.98 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:119-129)

To be true in word and deed is to hold
Our selfish desires at bay, and follow
Allah's Call: in this is our fullest satisfaction
And reward. But our striving should include
Study and teaching, for the Brethren's benefit
For Allah's Message increases our Faith
And leads us to love Him and trust Him,
The Lord of the Throne of Glory Supreme.

Section 15

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَكُونُواْ مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ (١١٩)

119. O ye who believe!

fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed).

مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُم مِّنَ الأَعْرَابِ أَن يَتَخَلَّفُواْ عَن رَّسُولِ اللّهِ...

120. It was not fitting for the people of Medina and the bedouin Arabs of the neighbourhood, to refuse to follow Allah's Messenger,

وَلاَ يَرْغَبُواْ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ عَن نَّفْسِهِ...

nor to prefer their own lives to his:

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ لاَ يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلاَ نَصَبٌ وَلاَ مَخْمَصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

because nothing could they suffer or do,

but was reckoned to their credit as a deed of righteousness,

whether they suffered thirst, or fatigue, or hunger, in the Cause of Allah,

... وَلاَ يَطَؤُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ... ...

or trod paths to raise the ire of the unbelievers,

... وَلاَ يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَّيْلاً إِلاَّ كُتِبَ لَهُم بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ...

or received any injury whatever from an enemy:

C1371. Again, the illustration is that of Tabuk, but the lesson is general.

We must not hold our own comfort or lives dearer than that of our leader, nor desert him in the hour of danger. If we have true devotion, we shall hold our own lives or comfort cheap in comparison to his.

But whatever service we render to the Cause of Allah, and whatever sufferings, hardships, or injuries we endure, or whatever resources we spend for the Cause, -

all goes to raise our degree in the spiritual world. Nothing is lost. Our reward is far greater in worth than any little service we can render, or any little hardship we can suffer, or any little contributions we can make to the Cause. We "painfully attain to joy".

... إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٢٠)

for Allah suffereth not the reward to be lost of those who do good;

... وَلاَ يُنفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلاَ كَبِيرَةً

121. Nor could they spend anything (for the Cause), small or great,

... وَلاَ يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلاَّ كُتِبَ لَهُمْ...

nor cut across a valley, but the deed is inscribed to their credit;

C1372. Cut across a valley: this is specially mentioned, as denoting an individual act of heroism, dash, or bravery. To march with the troops along valleys, tread paths of danger along with our Comrades, is good and praiseworthy:

Notice that both the things mentioned in this verse,- the spending of resources and the dashing across a valley- are individual acts, while those mentioned in the last verse are collective acts, which are in some ways easier.

The individual acts having been mentioned, the next verse follows naturally.

... لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (١٢١)

that Allah might requite their deed with the best (possible reward).

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُواْ كَآفَّةً...

122. Nor should the believers all go forth together:

فَلَوْلاَ نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُواْ فِي الدِّينِ...

if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion,

... وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ (١٢٢)

and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil).

C1373. Fighting may be inevitable, and where a call is made by the ruler of an Islamic State, it should be obeyed.

But fighting is not to be glorified to the exclusion of all else. Even among those who are able to go forth, a party should remain behind for purposes of study, so that when the fighters return home, their minds may be attuned again to the more normal interests of religious life, under properly instructed teachers.

The students and teachers are soldiers of the Jihad in their spirit of obedience and discipline. (R).

Section 16

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُم مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً...

123. O ye who believe!

fight the unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you;

C1374. When conflict becomes inevitable, the first thing is to clear our surroundings of all evil, for it is only evil that we can rightly fight. To evil we must put up a stout and stiff resistance.

Mealy-mouthed compromises are not right for soldiers of truth and righteousness. They are often a compound of cowardice, weariness, greed, and corruptibility.

... وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٢٣)

and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.

وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُم مَّن يَقُولُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَـٰذِهِ إِيمَانًا...

124. Whenever there cometh down a Surah, some of them say:

"Which of you has had his faith increased by it?"

C1375. The incompatibility of Unfaith and Faith are contrasted in this section in respect of revelation and the divine teacher.

The Unbelievers laugh at revelation, and say to each other mockingly: "Does this increase your faith?"

To the Believer every new aspect of Allah's truth as revealed increases his faith, and wonder, and gratitude. He rejoices, because he gets added strength for life and achievement.

... فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (١٢٤)

Yea, those who believe, their faith is increased, and they do rejoice.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَى رِجْسِهِمْ...

125. But those in whose hearts is a disease, it will add doubt to their doubt,

C1376. Cf. 2:10 and several similar passages.

Just as the light, which to healthy eyes gives enlightenment, causes pain to the diseased eye, which emits unclean matter, so to those spiritually diseased. Allah's grace is unwelcome, and they put forth more doubts to cover their disease. And they die in their disease, and of their disease.

Note the aptness of the metaphor.

... وَمَاتُواْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ (١٢٥)

and they will die in a state of unbelief.

أَوَلاَ يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ...

126. See they not that they are tried every year once or twice?

C1377. Yet, in spite of their infidelity, one or two chances are given them every year. The door is not closed to them. Yet thy deliberately turn away, and take no heed of all the warnings which their own nature and the teaching and example of good men should give them.

... ثُمَّ لاَ يَتُوبُونَ وَلاَ هُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (١٢٦)

Yet they turn not in repentance,

and they take no heed.

وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ...

127. Whenever there cometh down a Surah, they look at each other, (saying),

... هَلْ يَرَاكُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انصَرَفُواْ...

"Doth anyone see you?"

Then they turn aside:

... صَرَفَ اللّهُ قُلُوبَهُم بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لاَّ يَفْقَهُونَ (١٢٧)

Allah hath turned their hearts (from the light); for they are a people that understand not.

C1378. Even the Unbelievers, in their heart and conscience, feel uncomfortable when they turn away from Faith and Truth, and therefore their turning aside is figured by furtive glances, such as we may suppose literally to have been cast by the Hypocrites in the assemblies of the Holy Prophet, Then they slink away, feeling superior in their minds.

And yet, if they only knew it, their contumacy deprives them of Allah's grace and light. They are turning Grace away, and when Allah withdraws it altogether, they perish utterly.

لَقَدْ جَاءكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ...

128. Now hath come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves:

... عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم...

it grieves him that ye should perish:

ardently anxious is he over you:

... بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢٨)

to the believers is he most kind and merciful.

C1379. The tender heart of the Teacher is grieved that any among his flock should rush headlong to ruin. He watches ardently over them, and whenever any of them show signs of Faith, his kindness and mercy surround him and rejoice over him.

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللّهُ لا إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ...

129. But if they turn away, Say:

"Allah sufficeth me:

there is no god but He:

... عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ...

on Him is my trust,

... وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ (١٢٩)

He the Lord of the throne (of Glory) Supreme!"

C1380. But if the Message is rejected, he still proclaims the burning Faith of his heart, which is unquenchable. Allah is sufficient to all.

To trust Him is to find the accomplishment of all spiritual desire. His grandeur is figured by a lofty Throne, supreme in glory! Thus have we been led, through a notable incident in Al-Mustafa's earthly career, to truths of the highest spiritual import.

وَمَا كَانَ هَـٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَن يُفْتَرَىٰ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ

This Qur'án is not such as can be produced by other than Allah;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Yunus

يُونُسَ

Introduction and Summary

Chronologically this Surah and the five that follow (Surah 11-15) are closely connected, and were revealed in the late Makkan period, as the great event of the Hijrah was gradually approaching down the stream of Time. But their chronology has no particular significance.

On the other hand their arrangement in the gradation of Quranic teaching fits in with the subject matter. Surah 8 and Surah 9 were mainly concerned with the first questions that arose on the formation of the new and organized Community of Islam in its conflict with those who wished to suppress or

destroy it or use force to prevent its growth and the consolidation of its ideals. See Introduction to those Surahs.

The present group leads us to the questions that face us when external hostility has been met, and our relations to Allah have to be considered from a higher standpoint than that of self-preservation.

How does revelation work?

What is the meaning of divine grace and its withdrawal?

How do the Messengers of Allah deliver their Message? How should we receive it?

All these questions revolve around the revelation of the Quran and each Surah of this group except the 13th has the abbreviated Letters Alif, Lam, Ra, attached to it. Surah 13 has the letters, Alif, Lam, Mim, Ra, and we shall discuss this variation when we come to Surah 13.

As shown in Appendix I, the abbreviated Letters are mystic symbols, about whose meaning there is no authoritative explanation. If the theory advanced in n. 25 t0 2:1 has any validity, and the present group, Alif, Lam, Ra, is cognate to the group Alif, Lam, Mim, we have to consider and form some idea in our minds as to the probable meaning of the variation.

- We took Alif, Lam, Mim to be symbol of those Surahs that deal with the beginning, the middle, and the end of man's spiritual history-the origin, the present position, and the things to come in the Last Days (eschatology, to use a theological term).

- We took Alif, Lam, to stand as symbols of the first two, and Mim, of the last.

In the present group of Surahs we find hardly any eschatological matter, and therefore we can understand the absence of Mim, the symbol standing for such matter. In its place comes Ra, which is phonetically allied to Lam. Lam is produced by the impact of the tongue to the front of the palate, and Ra to the middle of the palate. In many language the letters Lam, and Ra are interchangeable; e.g., in Arabic, Al Rahman becomes ar-Rahman, and Ra in imperfect enunciation Lam, in Chinese lallations.

If Lam is symbol of present-day things looking to the future, we may take Ra as a symbol of present-day things looking within, i.e., into the interior of the organization of the Ummah. And this symbolism fits in with the subject matter of the Surahs in question. But no one should be dogmatic in speculation about mystic Symbols.

Let us now consider Surah 10 alone. The central theme is that Allah's wonderful Creation must not be viewed by us as a creation of material things only, once made and finished with. Most wonderful of all is how He reveals Himself to men through Prophets and Scriptures; how prophets are rejected by men, and the Message disbelieved until it is too late for repentance; and how, as in the case of Yunus (Jonah) and his people, even the rejection (when repentance supervenes) does not prevent Allah's grace and mercy from working, and how far that working is beyond man's comprehension.

Summary- The wonderful working of the Spirit through man by revelation seems like magic to men; yet they could find Signs and Messages from Him in the sun and the moon and the constantly varying yet regular phenomena of nature, from which men should take a lesson of constancy and Faith (10:1-20, and C. 99).

All the goodness or beauty that man meets in the life around him proceeds from Allah. Yet man is blind and will not understand (10:21-40, and C. 100).

As all things and beings proceed from Allah, so will they return to Him, and He is ever true. Why then does ungrateful man make untrue phantoms for himself instead of rejoicing in the good news which He sends? (10:41-70, and C. 101).

Allah revealed Himself through Noah, but Noah's people rejected him and perished. He spoke through Moses to Pharaoh, but Pharaoh was stiff-necked and arrogant, and when he repented at all, it was too late (10:71-92, and C. 102).

Everywhere want of faith causes people to perish. But the people of Yunus repented, and Allah saved them by His wonderful grace. So Allah will deliver the Believers. When the Truth comes from Allah, follow it and be patient, for Allah is the most righteous of Judges (10:93-109, and C. 103).

C.99 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:1-20)

Men may wonder that a man
Like unto them should bring a Message
From Allah, but Allah's Message shines
Forth through all nature and Creation.
He guides the human spirit, if only
Man will have Faith and put his hope
In Allah. Wonderful are Allah's relations
With man, yet man is ungrateful
And runs to fancies and fanciful gods.
Glory to the One True Allah, Who made
Mankind as One, and holds alone
The secrets of the Unseen in His
Great and good Universal Plan.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الر...

1. Alif Lam Ra.

C1381. For the Abbreviated Letters generally as mystic Symbols see Appendix I.

For this particular combination see the Introduction on this Surah.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ (١)...

These are the Ayat of the Book of Wisdom.

C1382. Ayat: Signs, or Verses of the Quran.

Here both meanings are to be understood. Each verse is a nugget of wisdom. And in the verses immediately

following, e.g., 10:3-6, examples are given of the wonders of Allah's material Creation. If the starry heavens impress us with their sublimity as signs of Allah's wisdom and power, how much more wonderful is it that He should speak to lowly man through His Messengers, in man's language, so that he can understand?

أَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا أَنْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَنْ أَنذِرِ النَّاسَ...

2. It is a matter of wonderment to men that We have set Our inspiration to a man from among themselves? -- that he should warn mankind (of their danger),

C1383. Is it not still more wonderful that the inspired man should be one of ourselves?

The Arabs had known Muhammad in other relations and conditions, and when the mighty Message came through his mouth -the message of Wisdom and Power, such as no man could speak as from himself, least of all a man not instructed in human learning,- they could only in their wonder attribute it to magic and sorcery.

They failed to understand that magic and sorcery were projections of their own mind, while here was solid, enduring Truth from Allah!

...وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنَّ لَهُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ...

and give the good news to the Believers that they have before their Lord the lofty rank of Truth,

C1384. Allah's Message was and is not all smooth and agreeable. The first thing is to convince us of our wrong-doing, and warn us of our danger. If we have Faith, we then learn what a high rank we obtain in the sight of Allah.

According to another view the word **"qadama"** here refers to the fact that the acts of a person precede him to his Lord.

The word **sidq** qualifies these acts with sincerity and genuineness. (R).

...قَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ إِنَّ هَـذَا لَسَاحِرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢)

(but) say the Unbelievers: "This is indeed an evident sorcerer!"

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ...

3. Verily your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days,

C1385. See n. 1031 to 7:54.

...ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ...

then He established Himself on the Throne (of authority),

C1386. Istawa, with the preposition ***ila*** after it, means He turned to or He directed Himself by His will to as in 2:29.

With the preposition ***'ala*** after it, as here and in 7:54 and elsewhere, the meaning seems to be "to mount or ascend," and to be firmly established, to sit firm and unshaken, beyond question.

The Throne represents many ideas: e.g.,

1. that God is high above all His Creation;
2. that He regulates and governs it, as a king does, whose authority is unquestionably recognised;
3. that He is not, therefore, like the gods of Greece, and paganism, who were imagined to be in a world apart, careless of mankind, or jealous of mankind, but on the contrary.
4. He disposes of their affairs and all affairs continuously and with justice;
5. that the authority of His prophets, ministers, and messengers is derived from Him, and such intercession as they can make is by His will and permission. (R).

... يُدَبِّرُ الأَمْرَ...

regulating and governing all things.

...مَا مِن شَفِيعٍ إِلاَّ مِن بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ...

No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His leave (hath been obtained).

...ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ...

This is Allah your Lord; Him therefore serve ye:

...أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٣)

will ye not receive admonition ?

C1387. Cf. 6:80.

...إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا...

4. To Him will be your return -- of all of you.

...وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا...

The promise of Allah is true and sure.

C1388. Haqq: true, right, for just ends, in right proportions, sure and certain:

all these ideas are implied.

...إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ...

It is He Who beginneth the process of Creation, and repeateth it,

C1389. Cf. n. 120 to 2:117.

Allah's creation is not a simple act, once done and finished with. It is continuous, and there are many stages, not the least important of which is the Hereafter, when the fruits of our life will be achieved.

...لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ بِالْقِسْطِ...

that He may reward with justice those who believe and work righteousness,

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ (٤)

but those who reject Him will have nothing but draughts of boiling fluids, and a Penalty grievous: because they did reject Him.

C1390. Hamim: boiling fluid:

it is associated as in 38:57, with gassaq, a dark, murky, or intensely cold fluid; both indicative of the grievous penalty that results from rebellion against Allah.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاء وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا...

5. It is He Who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light (of beauty),

C1391. The fitting epithet for the sun is **dhia**, "splendour and glory of brightness", and for the moon is "a light" (of beauty), the cool light that illuminates and helps in the darkness of the night.

But the sun and moon also measure time. The simplest observation can keep pace with the true lunar months and lunar years, which are all that is required by a pastoral people.

For agriculture solar years are required, as they indicate the changes of the seasons, but ordinary solar years are never exact; even the solar year of 3651/4 days requires correction by advanced astronomical calculation.

...وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُواْ عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ...

and measured out stages for her: that ye might know the number of years and the count (of time).

...مَا خَلَقَ اللّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ...

Nowise did Allah create this but in truth and righteousness.

C1392. Everything in Allah's creation has use and purpose, and fits into a Design. It is true in every sense of the word and it is good and just.

It is not merely a matter of sport or freak (21:16). Though so varied, it proclaims Allah's Unity; though a limited free-will is granted to creatures, the results of evil (which is rebellion) are neutralized and harmony is restored. Cf. 3:191.

...يُفَصِّلُ الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٥)

(Thus) doth He explain his Signs in detail, for those who understand.

C1393. Cf. 9:11.

إِنَّ فِي اخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ

لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَّقُونَ (٦)

6. Verily, in the alternation of the Night and the Day, and in all that Allah hath created, in the heavens and the earth, are Signs for those who fear Him.

C1394. Cf. 2:164.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءنَا وَرَضُواْ بِالْحَياةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّواْ بِهَا...

7. Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present,

...وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ (٧)

and those who heed not Our Signs --

C1395. Those who fall from Grace are described by three epithets:

1. the meeting with Allah is not the object of their hope and earnest desire, but something else, viz.
2. the material good of this world, which not only attracts them but apparently gives them complete satisfaction, so that there is no glow of the Future in their horizon, and
3. they are deaf and dead to the resounding and living Message of Allah,

1 and 2 refer to the extinction of Faith in them, and 3 to their failing a prey to the evils of this world in their conduct.

They are contrasted in 10:9 with the Faith and the Righteousness of those who accept Grace.

أُوْلَـئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْسِبُونَ (٨)

8. Their abode is the Fire, because of the (evil) they earned.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ...

9. Those who believe, and work righteousness, their Lord will guide them because of their faith:

C1396. Their Faith is the cause as well as the instrument of their Guidance, -the Kindly Light which leads them as well as the Joy which fills their Soul.

The usual symbols of Gardens and Fire are again contrasted - in each case the result of Good or Evil in Life,

...تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهِمُ الأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (٩)

beneath them will flow rivers in Gardens of Bliss.

...دَعْوَاهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلاَمٌ

10. (This will be) their cry therein:

"Glory to Thee, O Allah!"

and

"Peace" will be their greeting therein!

...وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠)

And the close of their cry will be:

"Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!"

C1397. A beautiful piece of spiritual melody! They sing and shout with joy, but their joy is in the Glory of Allah! The greetings they receive and the greetings they give are of Peace and Harmony!

From first to last they realise that it is Allah Who cherished them and made them grow, and His rays are their Light.

Section 2

...وَلَوْ يُعَجِّلُ اللّهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسْتِعْجَالَهُم بِالْخَيْرِ لَقُضِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَجَلُهُمْ

11. If Allah were to hasten for men the ill (they have earned) as they would fain hasten on the good -- then would their respite be settled at once.

C1398. Those who have no hope for the Future grasp at any temporary advantage, and in their blindness even mockingly ask for immediate punishment for their sins

(8:32), thus vainly challenging Allah, in Whom they do not believe.

If the beneficent Allah were to take them at their word, they would have no chance at all. Their doom would be sealed. But even the respite they get they use badly. They merely wander about distractedly like blind men, to and fro. Cf. 2:15.

...فَنَذَرُ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءنَا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (١١)

But We leave those who rest not their hope of their meeting with Us, in their trespasses, wandering in distraction to and fro.

...وَإِذَا مَسَّ الإِنسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنبِهِ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَآئِمًا

12. When trouble toucheth a man, he crieth unto Us (in all postures) lying down on his side, or sitting, or standing.

C1399. Not only do men fail to use their respite: even those who have a superficial belief in Allah call on Him in their trouble but forget Him when He has relieved their trouble.

Their Faith is not strong enough to make them realise that all good proceeds from Allah. But in moments of trouble they use every position, literally and figuratively, to appeal to Him.

...فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهُ مَرَّ كَأَن لَّمْ يَدْعُنَا إِلَى ضُرٍّ مَّسَّهُ...

But when We have solved his trouble, he passeth on his way as if he had never cried to Us for a trouble that touched him!

...كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (١٢)

Thus do the deeds of transgressors seem fair in their eyes!

C1400. Those without Faith are selfish, and are so wrapped up in themselves that they think every good that comes to them is due to their own merits or cleverness. That is itself a cause of their undoing. They do not see their own faults.

...وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُواْ

13. Generations before you We destroyed when they did wrong:

...وَجَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُواْ لِيُؤْمِنُواْ...

their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, but they would not believe!

...كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٣)

Thus do We requite those who sin!

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلاَئِفَ فِي الأَرْضِ مِن بَعْدِهِم لِنَنظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٤)

14. Then We made you heirs in the land after them, to see how ye would behave!

C1401. This is addressed to the Quraish in the first instance, for they had succeeded to the 'Ad and the Thamud heritage.

But the application is universal, and was true to the 'Abbasi Empire in the time of Harun-ar-Rashid, or the Muslim Empire in Spain or the Turkish Empire in its palmiest days, and indeed, apart from political power, to the Muslims and non-Muslims of our own days.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ...

15. But when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed unto them,

...قَالَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءنَا ائْتِ بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَـذَا أَوْ بَدِّلْهُ...

those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, say:

"Bring us a Reading other than this, or change this."

C1402. Reading: in the Arabic, the word is "Quran", which may mean Reading or in the special sense, the Quran.

The duty of Allah's Messenger is to deliver Allah's Message as it is revealed to him, whether it please or displease those who hear it.

Selfish men want to read their own desires or fancies into religious precepts, and thus they are often willing to use Religion for their own ends. Most of the corruptions of Religion are due to this cause. But Religion is not to be so prostituted.

...قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِن تِلْقَاء نَفْسِي...

Say: "It is not for me, of my own accord, to change it:

...إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلاَّ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيَّ...

I follow naught but what is revealed unto me:

...إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٥)

if I were to disobey my Lord, I should myself fear the Penalty of a Great Day (to come)."

...قُل لَّوْ شَاء اللّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلاَ أَدْرَاكُم بِهِ...

16. Say: "If Allah had so willed, I should not have rehearsed it to you, nor would He have made it known to you.

C1403. It is in Allah's Plan that He should reveal Himself in certain ways to His creatures, and His Messengers are the instruments that carry out His will.

It is in itself gracious Mercy that He should thus make His Will known. We should be grateful for His guidance instead of carping at it.

...فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ...

A whole lifetime before this have I tarried amongst you:

...أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٦)

will ye not then understand?"

C1404. Muhammad Al-Mustafa had lived his whole life of purity and virtue amongst his people, and they knew and Mustafa acknowledged it before he received his mission.

They knew he loved his nation and was loyal to it. Why should they turn against him when he had to point out under inspiration all their sins and wrong-doing?

It was for their own good. And he had to plead again and again with them:

"Will you not understand, and see what a glorious privilege it is for you to receive true guidance from Allah?"

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ...

17. Who doth more wrong than such as forge a lie against Allah, or deny His Signs?

...إِنَّهُ لاَ يُفْلِحُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ (١٧)

But never will prosper those who sin.

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ مَا لاَ يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلاَ يَنفَعُهُمْ...

18. They serve, besides Allah, things that hurt them not nor profit them,

...وَيَقُولُونَ هَـؤُلاء شُفَعَاؤُنَا عِندَ اللّهِ...

and they say: "These are our intercessors with Allah."

...قُلْ أَتُنَبِّئُونَ اللّهَ بِمَا لاَ يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلاَ فِي الأَرْضِ ...

Say: "Do ye indeed inform Allah of something He knows not in the heavens or on earth? --

C1405. When we shut our eyes to Allah's glory and goodness, and go after false gods, we give some plausible excuse to ourselves, such as that they will intercede for us.

But how can stocks and stones intercede for us?

And how can men intercede for us, when they themselves have need of Allah's Mercy?

Even the best and noblest cannot intercede as of right, but only with His permission (10:3). To pretend that there are other powers than Allah is to invent lies and to teach Allah.

There is nothing in heaven or earth that He does not know, and there is no other like unto Him.

...سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (١٨)

Glory to Him! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!"

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلاَّ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُواْ...

19. Mankind was but one nation, but differed (later).

C1406. Cf. 2:213.

All mankind was created one, and Allah's Message to mankind is in essence one, the Message of Unity and Truth.

But as selfishness and egotism got hold of man, certain differences sprang up between individuals, races, and nations, and in His infinite Mercy He sent them messengers and messages to suit their varying mentality, to test them by His gifts, and stir them up to emulation in virtue and piety (5:48).

...وَلَوْلاَ كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيمَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٩)

Had it not been for a word that went forth before from thy Lord, their differences would have been settled between them.

C1407. Cf. 6:115. 9:40, and 4:171.

"Word" is the Decree of Allah, the expression of His Universal Will or Wisdom in a particular case.

When men began to diverge from one another (see last note). Allah made their very differences subserve the higher ends by increasing their emulation in virtue and piety, and thus pointing back to the ultimate Unity and Reality. (R).

...وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْلاَ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ

20. They say: "Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord?"

...فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلّهِ فَانتَظِرُواْ إِنِّي مَعَكُم مِّنَ الْمُنتَظِرِينَ (٢٠)

Say: "The Unseen is only for Allah (to know). Then wait ye: I too will wait with you."

C1408. Their demand for a Sign is disingenuous. All nature and revelation furnishes them with incontestable Signs. What they want is the Book of the Unseen opened out to them like the physical leaves of a book. But they forget that a physical Book is on a wholly different plane from Allah's Mysteries, and that their physical natures cannot apprehend the mysteries.

They must wait. Truth will also wait. But the waiting in the two cases is in quite different senses. Cf. 6:158 and 9:52.

C.100 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:21-40)

The good, the beautiful, and the useful
In man's life are derived from Allah;
Yet man is ungrateful. He runs
After the ephemeral things of this life;
Yet they are no better than the green
Of fields, that lasts for a season
Ere it perish! Allah's call is to an eternal
Home of Peace. Will ye not answer it?
Know ye not that it is He Who sustains
And cherishes? No partner has He.
And He speaks to His creatures and guides them
Through His wonderful Book unmatched.

Section 3

وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِّن بَعْدِ ضَرَّاء مَسَّتْهُمْ إِذَا لَهُم مَّكْرٌ فِي آيَاتِنَا...

21. When We make mankind taste of some mercy after adversity hath touched them,

Behold! they take to plotting against our Signs!

...قُلِ اللّهُ أَسْرَعُ مَكْرًا...

Say: "Swifter to plan is Allah!"

...إِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُونَ مَا تَمْكُرُونَ (٢١)...

Verily, Our Messengers record all the plots that ye make!

C1409. Man turns his thoughts in adversity to Allah. But as soon as the trouble is past, he not only forgets Him but actually strives against His cause.

But such people are poor ignorant creatures, not realising that the Universal Plan of Allah is swifter to stop their petty plans, and that though they fail, the record of them remains eternally against them. (R).

هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ...

22. He it is Who enableth you to traverse through land and sea;

...حَتَّى إِذَا كُنتُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِم بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا...

so that ye even board ships --

they sail with them with a favorable wind, and they rejoice thereat;

...جَاءتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ

أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ...

then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think they are being overwhelmed:

...دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ...

they cry unto Allah, sincerely offering (their) duty unto Him, saying,

...لَئِنْ أَنجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَـذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (٢٢)

"If Thou dost deliver us from this, we shall truly show our gratitude!"

C1410. All the great inventions and discoveries on which man prides himself are the fruit of that genius and talent which Allah has freely given of His grace. But the spirit of man remains petty, as is illustrated by the parable from the sea.

How the heart of man rejoices when the ship goes smoothly with favourable winds!

How in adversity it turns, in terror and helplessness, to Allah, and makes vows for deliverance! and how those vows are disregarded as soon as the danger is past!

Cf. 6:63.

فَلَمَّا أَنجَاهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ...

23. But when He delivereth them, Behold! they transgress insolently through the earth in defiance of right!

...يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلَى أَنفُسِكُم...

O mankind!

your insolence is against your own souls --

C1411. In our insolence and pride we do not see how small and ephemeral is that part of us which is mortal. We shall see it at last when we appear before our Judge. In the meantime our ridiculous pretensions only hurt ourselves.

...مَّتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

an enjoyment of the life of the Present:

...ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٣)...

in the end, to Us is your return, and We shall show you the truth of all that ye did.

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاء أَنزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاء...

24. The likeness of the life of the present is as the rain which We send down from the skies:

C1412. Another beautiful Parable, explaining the nature of our present life.

The rain comes down in drops and mingles with the earth. Through it, by Allah's matchless artistry, the womb of the earth is made fruitful. All kinds of good, useful, and beautiful grains, vegetables, and fruits are produced for men and animals. The earth is covered in its bravery of green and gold and all kinds of colours.

Perhaps the "owner" takes all the credit to himself, and thinks that this will last eternally. A hailstorm or a blast, a frost or a volcanic eruption, comes and destroys it, or it may be even normally, that the time of harvest comes, and the fields and orchards are stripped bare by some blight or disease.

Where is the beauty and bravery of yesterday?

All that is left is dust and ashes!

What more can we get from this physical material life?

... فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالأَنْعَامُ...

by its mingling arises the produce of the earth -- which provides food for men and animals:

...حَتَّىَ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَادِرُونَ عَلَيْهَآ...

(it grows) till the earth is clad with its golden ornaments and is decked out (in beauty):

the people to whom it belongs think they have all powers of disposal over it:

...أَتَاهَا أَمْرُنَا لَيْلاً أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَ بِالأَمْسِ...

there reaches it Our command by night or by day, and We make it like a harvest clean-mown, as if it had not flourished only the day before!

...كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢٤)

Thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who reflect.

وَاللهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلاَمِ وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٢٥)

25. But Allah doth call to the Home of Peace:

He doth guide whom He pleaseth to a way that is straight.

C1413. In contrast with the ephemeral and uncertain pleasures of this material life, there is a higher life to which Allah is always calling.

It is called the Home of Peace. For there is no fear, nor disappointment nor sorrow there. And all are called, and those will be chosen who have sought, not material advantages, but the Good Pleasure of Allah.

Salam, Peace, is from the same root as Islam, the Religion of Unity and Harmony.

... لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُواْ الْحُسْنَى وَزِيَادَةٌ

26. To those who do right is a goodly (reward) -- yea, more (than in measure)!

C1414. The reward of the righteous will be far more than in proportion to their merits. For they will have the supreme bliss of being near to Allah, and "seeing His face". (R).

... وَلاَ يَرْهَقُ وُجُوهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلاَ ذِلَّةٌ...

No darkness nor shame shall cover their faces!

C1415. The face is the symbol of the Personality, the inner and real Self, which is the antithesis of the outer and ephemeral Self.

It will be illuminated with Allah's Light, behind which is no shadow or darkness. All its old shortcomings will be blotted out, with their sense of shame, for there will be Perfection, as in Allah's sight.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٦)

They are Companions of the Garden; they will abide therein (for aye)!

... وَالَّذِينَ كَسَبُواْ السَّيِّئَاتِ جَزَاء سَيِّئَةٍ بِمِثْلِهَا ...

27. But those who have earned evil will have a reward of like evil:

C1416. Note that the evil reward is for those who have "earned" evil, i.e., brought it on themselves by the deliberate choice of evil.

Further, in the justice of Allah, they will be requited with evil similar to, and not greater in quantity or intensity, than the evil they had done,-unlike the good, who, in Allah's generosity, get a reward far greater than anything they have earned or could possibly earn.

... وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ...

ignominy will cover their (faces):

...مَّا لَهُم مِّنَ اللّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ...

no defender will they have from (the wrath of) Allah:

...كَأَنَّمَا أُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ قِطَعًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا...

their faces will be covered, as it were, with pieces from the depth of the darkness of Night:

C1417. Night is the negation of Light and metaphorically of joy and felicity. The intensive is indicated by "the depth of the darkness of Night."

أُوْلَـٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٧)...

they are Companions of the Fire:

they will abide therein (for aye)!

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا مَكَانَكُمْ أَنتُمْ وَشُرَكَآؤُ...

28. One Day shall We gather them all together. Then shall We say to those who joined gods (with Us):

"To your place! ye and those ye joined as 'partners.'"

كُمْ فَزَيَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ...

We shall separate them,

وَقَالَ شُرَكَآؤُهُم مَّا كُنتُمْ إِيَّانَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢٨)...

and their "partners" shall say: "It was not us that ye worshipped!"

C1418. The false gods are not real: they are only the figments of the imaginations of those who indulged in the false worship.

But the prophets or great or good men whose names were vainly taken in competition with the name of Allah, and the personified Ideas or Idols treated in the same way would themselves protest against their names being used in that way, and show that the worship was paid not to them, but to the ignorance or superstition or selfish lusts of the false worshippers.

فَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ إِن كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغَافِلِينَ (٢٩)

29. "Enough is Allah for a witness between us and you: we certainly knew nothing of your worship of us!

C1419. See last note.

They did not even know that they were being falsely worshipped in that way.

هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُو كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا أَسْلَفَتْ...

30. There will every soul prove (the fruits of) the deeds it sent before:

C1420. Cf. 2:95, where the verb used is qaddama. The verb **aslafa**, used here, is nearly synonymous.

...وَرُدُّواْ إِلَى اللّهِ مَوْلاَهُمُ الْحَقِّ...

they will be brought back to Allah their rightful Lord,

...وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ (٣٠)

and their invented falsehoods will leave them in the lurch.

C1421. Instead of their false ideas helping them, they will desert them and leave them in the lurch.

Cf. 6:24.

Section 4

...قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالأَرْضِ...

31. Say:

"Who is it that sustains you (in life) from the sky and from the earth?

C1422. Sustenance may be understood in the sense of all the provision necessary for maintaining physical life as well as mental and spiritual development and well-being.

- Examples of the former are light and rain from heaven and the produce of the earth and facilities of movement on land and sea and in air.
- Examples of the latter are the moral and spiritual influences that come from our fellow-men, and from the great Teachers and Prophets.

...أَمَّن يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ والأَبْصَارَ...

Or who is it that has power over hearing and sight?

C1423. Just two of our ordinary faculties, hearing and sight, are mentioned, as examples of the rest.

All the gifts of Allah, physical and spiritual, are enjoyed and incorporated by us by means of the faculties and capacities with which He has endowed us.

وَمَن يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيَّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ...

And who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living?

C1424. Cf. 3:27 and n. 371; 6:95 and n. 920 ; and 30:19.

...وَمَن يُدَبِّرُ الأَمْرَ...

And who is it that rules and regulates all affairs?"

C1425. This is the general summing-up of the argument. The government of the whole Creation and its maintenance and sustenance is in the hands of Allah.

How futile then would it be to neglect His true worship and go after false gods?

...فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللّهُ...

They will soon say, "Allah."

...فَقُلْ أَفَلاَ تَتَّقُونَ (٣١)

Say, "Will ye not then show piety (to Him)?"

فَذَلِكُمُ اللّهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلاَّ الضَّلاَلُ...

32. Such is Allah, your real Cherisher and Sustainer:
apart from Truth, what (remains) but error?

C1426. The wonderful handiwork and wisdom of Allah having been referred to, as the real Truth, as against the false worship and false gods that men set up, it follows that to disregard the Truth must lead us into woeful wrong, not only in our beliefs but in our conduct. We shall err and stray and be lost.

How then can we turn away from the Truth?

...فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ (٣٢)

How then are ye turned away?

كَذَلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ فَسَقُواْ ...

33. Thus is the Word of thy Lord proved true against those who rebel:

C1427. Disobedience to Allah brings its own terrible consequences on ourselves. The Law, the Word, the Decree, of Allah must be fulfilled.

If we go to false gods, our Faith will be dimmed, and then extinguished. Our spiritual faculties will be dead.

... أَنَّهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣٣)

verily they will not believe.

قُلْ هَلْ مِن شُرَكَآئِكُم مَّن يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ...

34. Say: "Of your 'partners,' can any originate creation and repeat it?"

C1428. The argument is now turned in another direction. The false gods can neither create out of nothing nor sustain the creative energy which maintains the world. Nor can they give any guidance which can be of use for the future destiny of mankind: on the contrary they themselves (assuming they were men who were deified) stand in need of such guidance.

Why then follow vain fancies, instead of going to the source of all knowledge, truth, and guidance, and worship, serve, and obey Allah, the One True God?

...قُلِ اللّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ...

Say: "It is Allah Who originates Creation and repeats it:

...فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ (٣٤)

then how are ye deluded away (from the truth)?"

قُلْ هَلْ مِن شُرَكَآئِكُم مَّن يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ...

35. Say: "Of your 'partners' is there any that can give any guidance towards Truth?"

...قُلِ اللّهُ يَهْدِي لِلْحَقِّ...

Say: "It is Allah Who gives guidance towards Truth.

...أَفَمَن يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَن يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّن لاَّ يَهِدِّيَ...

Is then He Who gives guidance to Truth more worthy to be followed, or he who finds not guidance (himself) unless he is guided?

...إِلاَّ أَن يُهْدَى فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (٣٥)

What then is the matter with you?

How judge ye?"

...وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلاَّ ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ

36. But most of them follow nothing but fancy:

...لاَ يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا...

truly fancy can be of no avail against Truth.

...إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)

Verily Allah is well aware of all that they do.

...وَمَا كَانَ هَـذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَن يُفْتَرَى مِن دُونِ اللّهِ

37. This Qur'án is not such as can be produced by other than Allah;

...وَلَـكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ...

on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it,

...وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٧)

and a fuller explanation of the Book -- wherein there is no doubt -- from the Lord of the Worlds.

C1429. The Book: Cf. 3:23 and n. 366.

Allah's revelation throughout the ages is one. The Quran confirms, fulfils, completes, and further explains the one true revelation, which has been sent by the One True God in all ages.

...أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ

38. Or do they say, "He forged it"?

...قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ...

Say:

"Bring then a Surah like unto it,

...وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣٨)

and call (to your aid) anyone you can, besides Allah, if it be ye speak the truth!"

C1430. Cf. 2:23 and n. 42.

...بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعِلْمِهِ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ تَأْوِيلُهُ...

39. Nay,

they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the elucidation thereof hath reached them:

C1431. Taawil: elucidation, explanation, final fulfilment, Cf., 7:53,

The Message of Allah not only gives us rules for our every-day conduct, but speaks of high matters of religious significance, which require elucidation in two ways:

- by experience from the actual facts of life, and
- by the final fulfilment of the hopes and warnings which we now take on trust through our Faith.

The Unbelievers reject Allah's Message simply because they cannot understand it and without giving it even a chance of elucidation in any of these ways. (R).

...كَذَٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ... ...

thus did those before them make charges of falsehood:

...فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ (٣٩)

but see what was the end of those who did wrong!

C1432. Wrong-doers always came to grief ultimately.

The true course of history shows it from a broad standpoint. But they are so headstrong that they prejudge issues in their ignorance before they are decided.

وَمِنهُم مَّن يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمِنْهُم مَّن لاَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ...

40. Of them there are some who believe therein, and some who do not:

...وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ (٤٠)

and thy Lord knoweth best those who are out for mischief.

C.101 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:41-70)

Men but wrong their own souls in shutting out
The truth of Allah. To Him will be
Their return. They have been warned
At all times and among all peoples
By chosen Prophets of Allah, whom they
Have flouted. The Day will come
When they will see the majesty, the glory,
The goodness, and the justice of Allah.
But they invent fancies and falsehoods.
Let not their blasphemies and falsehoods
Grieve the men of Allah; for falsehoods
And false ones will never prosper.

Section 5

وَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُل لِّي عَمَلِي وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ...

41. If they charge thee with falsehood, say:

"My work to me, and yours to you!

C1433. When the Prophet of Allah is rejected and charged with falsehood, he does not give up his work, but continues to teach and preach his Message. He can well say to those who interfere with him:

"Mind your own business: supposing your charge against me is true, you incur no responsibility: I have to answer for it before Allah: and if I do my duty and deliver my Message, your rejection does not make me liable for your wrong-doing: you will have to answer before Allah."

...أَنتُمْ بَرِيئُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٤١)

Ye are free from responsibility for what I do, and I for what ye do!"

...وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ

42. Among them are some who (pretend to) listen to thee:

...أَفَأَنتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ (٤٢)

but canst thou make the deaf to hear -- even though they are without understanding?

C1434. Cf. 6:25, 36, 39 and notes.

Hypocrites go to hear and see some great Teacher, but they get no profit out of it because they are not sincerely seeking the truth. They are like the blind, or the deaf, or the imbeciles. It is impossible to guide them, because they have not the will to be guided.

...وَمِنهُم مَّن يَنظُرُ إِلَيْكَ

43. And among them are some who look at thee:

...أَفَأَنتَ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ (٤٣)

but canst thou guide the blind -- even though they will not see?

إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَـكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٤٤)

44. Verily Allah will not deal unjustly with man in aught:

it is man that wrongs his own soul.

C1435. Allah cannot be blamed for man's evil, nor will He deal unjustly with man.

He has given him faculties and means of guidance. If man goes wrong, it is because he wrongs himself.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَثُواْ إِلاَّ سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ ...

45. One day He will gather them together:

(it will be) as if they had tarried but an hour of a day:

C1436. In eternity our life on this earth will look as if it had been just a little part of our little day, and so also will appear any interval between our death and the call to Judgment.

... يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ...

they will recognize each other:

C1437. We shall retain some perception of our mutual relations on earth, so that the righteous judgment which will be pronounced will be intelligible to us, and we shall be convinced of its righteousness.

...قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِلِقَاء اللّهِ وَمَا كَانُواْ مُهْتَدِينَ (٤٥)

assuredly those will be lost who denied the meeting with Allah and refused to receive true guidance.

وَإِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ...

46. Whether We show thee (realized in thy lifetime) some part of what We promise them -- or We take thy soul (to Our Mercy)

...فَإِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ اللّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَى مَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٤٦)

(before that) -- in any case, to Us is their return: ultimately Allah is witness to all that they do.

C1438. The Prophet is assured that the end of evil is evil, just as the end of good is good. Whether this result is made plain before his very eyes in his own life-time or afterwards, makes no difference.

The wicked should not rejoice if they are given rope and seem to have the upper hand for a time, nor should the righteous lose heart: for Allah's promise is sure and must come to pass.

And in any case, the scales can only be partially, if at all, adjusted in this life. There is the final and complete adjustment on the Day of Judgment. Allah is All-Knowing, and all truth will be before Him.

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولٌ...

47. To every people (was sent) a Messenger:

C1439. Every people or generation or nation had its Message or Messenger: Allah revealed Himself to it in some way or another. If that Messenger was ignored or rejected, or his Message was twisted or misused, the Day of Reckoning will come, when perfect justice will be done and the whole Truth revealed.

The Unbelievers mockingly say: "If that is true, pray tell us when that Day will come!" The answer of the Messenger is:

"It will come in good time: no one can either hasten or retard it. If you want me then to save you or if you fear that I shall harm you for your treatment of me, know that this matter is in the hands of Allah alone, Who will do perfect justice. Even in regard to myself, any harm or good that befalls me is by the command and in the power of Allah".

...فَإِذَا جَاء رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُونَ (٤٧)

when their Messenger comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَـذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٨)

48. They say: "When will this promise come to pass -- if ye speak the truth?"

قُل لاَّ أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي ضَرًّا وَلاَ نَفْعًا إِلاَّ مَا شَاء اللّهُ...

49. Say: "I have no power over any harm or profit to myself except as Allah willeth.

C1440. Cf. 7:188.

...لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ...

To every People is a term appointed:

C1441. This repeats 7:34, but the significance is different in the two contexts.

Here the reply is to the Unbelievers' mocking incredulity (see n. 1439) as to whether there is such a thing as a Hereafter: they suggest to the Prophet of Allah that if his claim to inspiration from Allah is true, he should get them punished at once for rejecting him.

In 7:34 the reference is to the punishment of iniquity as described in 7:33: sin is not necessarily punished at once: every People or generation gets a chance-, when their term is fulfilled, the final adjustment is made.

...إِذَا جَاء أَجَلُهُمْ فَلاَ يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلاَ يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ (٤٩)

when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay,

nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation).

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُهُ بَيَاتًا أَوْ نَهَارًا مَّاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ

الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٥٠)

50. Say:

"Do ye see -- if His punishment should come to you by night or by day, what portion of it would the Sinners wish to hasten?

C1442. The mockery of Unbelievers will be turned into panic when the wrath of Allah descends on them. It may do so suddenly, by night or by day, when they]cast expect it. Will they then say of any bit of it: "Let it be hastened"?

...أَثُمَّ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ آمَنْتُم بِهِ

51. "Would ye then believe in it at last, when it actually cometh to pass?

...آلآنَ وَقَدْ كُنتُم بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (٥١)

(It will then be said): 'Ah! now?

And ye wanted (aforetime) to hasten it on!"

...ثُمَّ قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ ذُوقُواْ عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ

52. "At length will be said to the wrongdoers:

"Taste ye the enduring punishment! Ye get

C1443. This will be the final doom, and they will themselves have brought it on themselves!

The psychology of the Unbelievers is here analyzed and exposed. This particular argument begins at 10:47 and ends at 10:53.

It begins with the general statement that every People has had due warning and explanation by means of a Prophet specially sent to them: that Prophet will be a relevant witness at the final Judgment, when the matter will be judged in perfect equity.

Then follows a dialogue. The Unbelievers mock and say, "Why not bring on the Punishment now?" The reply to the Unbelievers is,

"It will come in Allah's good time".

The Believers are told to watch and see how the sinners would take it if the Punishment were to come at once. Would they not think it too sudden? When it actually comes, their panic will be indescribable.

"Is that true?" say the Unbelievers.

"It is the very truth," is the answer, "and nothing can ward it of'.

...هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلاَّ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ (٥٢)

but the recompense of what ye earned!' "

...وَيَسْتَنبِئُونَكَ أَحَقٌّ هُوَ

53. They seek to be informed by thee: "Is that true?"

...قُلْ إِي وَرَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ

Say: "Aye! by my Lord! It is the very truth!

...وَمَا أَنتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٥٣)

and ye cannot frustrate it!"

Section 6

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي الأَرْضِ لاَفْتَدَتْ بِهِ...

54. Every soul that hath sinned, if it possessed all that is on earth, would fain give it in ransom:

C1444. Cf. 3:91.

...وَأَسَرُّواْ النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُاْ الْعَذَابَ...

they would declare (their) repentance when they see the Penalty:

C1445. Declare their repentance: the verb in the original is asarru, which may mean either "declare" or "reveal" or else "conceal" or "hide".

The classical Commentators are divided as to the meaning to be adopted here.

- If the first, which I prefer, the sense would be:

  "When the Penalty stares the sinners in the face, they would give anything to escape it, and they would even openly declare their repentance, which would be a source of shame and ignominy to them."

- If the latter meaning be taken, the sense would be:

  "They would give anything to escape the Penalty; but the hardest thing of all for them is frankly to confess and repent, and so they conceal their sense of shame and ignominy."

...وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُونَ (٥٤)

but the judgment between them will be with justice,

and no wrong will be done unto them.

أَلا إِنَّ لِلّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

55. Is it not (the case) that to Allah belongeth whatever is in the heavens and on earth?

...أَلاَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٥)

Is it not (the case) that Allah's promise is assuredly true?

Yet most of them understand not.

هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٥٦)

56. Is it He Who giveth life and who taketh it, and to Him shall ye all be brought back.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءتْكُم مَّوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاء لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ...

57. O mankind!

there hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts --

C1446. Those who do wrong have a disease in their hearts, which will cause their spiritual death.

Allah in His Mercy declares His Will to them, which should direct their lives and provide a healing for their spiritual disease. If they accept Faith, the remedy acts; they find themselves in right guidance and receive Allah's forgiveness and mercy.

Surely those are far better gifts than material advantages, wealth, or possessions.

...وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٧)

and for those who believe, a Guidance and a Mercy.

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُواْ...

58. Say:

"In the Bounty of Allah, and in His Mercy -- in that let them rejoice":

...هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (٥٨)

that is better than the (wealth) they hoard.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُم مَّا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ لَكُم مِّن رِّزْقٍ...

59. Say:

"See ye what things Allah hath sent down to you for sustenance?

C1447. "Sustenance" is to be taken in both the literal and the metaphorical sense.

- In the literal sense, what fine and varied things Allah has provided for us on land and in sea and air, in the

vegetable, animal, and mineral kingdoms? Yet narrow minds put artificial barriers against their use.

- In the metaphorical sense, what enchanting fields of knowledge and spiritual endeavour are provided in our individual and social lives?

  And who is to say that some are lawful and others forbidden?

  Supposing they were so in special circumstances, it is not right to attribute artificial restrictions of that kind to Allah and falsely erect religious sanctions against them.

...فَجَعَلْتُم مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا وَحَلَالاً...

Yet ye hold forbidden some things thereof and (some things) lawful."

...قُلْ آللّهُ أذِنَ لَكُمْ أمْ عَلَى اللّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ (٥٩)

Say:

"Hath Allah indeed permitted you, or do ye invent (things) to attribute to Allah?"

...وَمَا ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ الْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

60. And what think those who invent lies against Allah, of the Day of Judgment?

C1448. People who lie in Religion or invent false gods, or false worship,-have they any idea of the Day of Judgment, when they will be called to account, and will have to answer for their deeds?

...إِنَّ اللّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لاَ يَشْكُرُونَ (٦٠)

Verily Allah is full of Bounty to mankind, but most of them are ungrateful.

C1449. Allah is most kind, and gracious, and generous with His gifts of all kinds, material and spiritual. But men do not understand, and are ungrateful in forgetting the Giver of all and setting up false objects of worship and false standards of pride.

Section 7

وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَتْلُو مِنْهُ مِن قُرْآنٍ...

61. In whatever business thou mayest be, and whatever portion thou mayest be reciting from the Qur'án --

...وَلاَ تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلاَّ كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ...

and whatever deed ye (mankind) may be doing --

We are Witnesses thereof when ye are deeply engrossed therein.

...وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَن رَّبِّكَ مِن مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الأَرْضِ وَلاَ فِي السَّمَاءِ...

Nor is hidden from thy Lord (so much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in heaven.

...وَلاَ أَصْغَرَ مِن ذَلِكَ وَلا أَكْبَرَ إِلاَّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٦١)

And not the least and not the greatest of these things but are recorded in a clear Record.

C1450. There is nothing that men can do but Allah is a witness to it. We may be deeply engrossed in some particular thing and for the time being be quite unconscious of other things. But Allah's knowledge not only comprehends all things, but has all things actively before it.

Nothing is hidden from Him. And His knowledge has another quality which human knowledge has not.

Human knowledge is subject to time, and is obliterated by time. Allah's knowledge is like a Record and endures for ever. And His Record has a further quality which human records have not. The most permanent human record may be quite intelligible to those who make it but may be ambiguous to others and may become unintelligible with the progress of time, as happens almost invariably to the most enduring inscriptions from very ancient times: but in Allah's "Record" or knowledge there is no ambiguity, for it is independent of time, or place, This is the force of **Mubin** ("clear") here.

أَلا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاء اللّهِ لاَ خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦٢)

62. Behold!

verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve;

C1451. Allah's all-embracing knowledge and constant watchful care over all His creatures, may be a source of fear to sinners, but there is no fear for those whom He honours with His love and friendship,-neither in this world nor in the world to come.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَكَانُواْ يَتَّقُونَ (٦٣)

63. Those who believe and (constantly) guard against evil --

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الآخِرَةِ...

64. For them are Glad Tidings, in the life of the Present and in the Hereafter:

...لاَ تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللّهِ...

no change can there be in the Words of Allah.

...ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٦٤)

This is indeed the supreme Felicity.

... وَلاَ يَحْزُنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ...

65. Let not their speech grieve thee:

C1452. Sometimes the words of the unrighteous or their reviling hurt or grieve the righteous man, but there is no occasion for either anger or sorrow: they have no power and they can do no real dishonour, for all power and honour are from Allah.

... إِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّهِ جَمِيعًا...

for all power and honor belong to Allah:

...هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦٥)

it is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).

أَلا إِنَّ لِلّهِ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الأَرْضِ...

66. Behold!

verily to Allah belong all creatures, in the heavens and on earth.

...وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ شُرَكَاء...

What do they follow who worship as His "partners" other than Allah?

...إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلاَّ يَخْرُصُونَ (٦٦)

They follow nothing but fancy, and they do nothing but lie.

C1453. All creatures are subject to Allah. If, therefore, any false worship is set up, the false gods-so called "partners" are merely creatures of imagination or false inventions.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُواْ فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا...

67. He it is that hath made you the night that ye may rest therein, and the Day to make things visible (to you).

C1454. Our physical life -and our higher life in so far as it is linked with the physical- is sustained by the alternation of rest and activity, and the fit environment for this alternation is the succession of Nights and Days in our physical world. The Day makes the things "visible to us-" a beautiful symbol, not only of the physical work for which we go about by day, but of the higher activities which are fitly associated with seeing, perception and enquiry.

Intuition (insight) is a little out of that circle because that may come by night, when our other faculties are resting.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ (٦٧)

Verily in this are Signs for those who listen (to His Message).

قَالُواْ اتَّخَذَ اللّهُ وَلَدًا...

68. They say, "Allah hath begotten a son!"

...سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ...

Glory be to Him!

He is self-sufficient!

...لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

His are all things in the heavens and on earth!

...إِنْ عِندَكُم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ بِهَـذَا...

No warrant have ye for this!

...أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٦٨)

Say ye about Allah what ye know not?

قُلْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللّهِ الْكَذِبَ لاَ يُفْلِحُونَ (٦٩)

69. Say:

"Those who invent a lie against Allah will never prosper."

C1455. In Quranic language "prosperity" refers both to our every-day life and to the higher life within us, -to the Present and the Future,- health and strength, opportunities and resources, a spirit of contentment, and the power of influencing others.

Here there seems to be an extra touch of meaning. A liar not only deprives himself of prosperity in all senses, but his "lie" itself against Allah will not succeed: it will and must be found out.

مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ...

70. A little enjoyment in this world! -- and, then, to Us will be their return.

...ثُمَّ نُذِيقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيدَ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْفُرُونَ (٧٠)

Then shall We make them taste the severest Penalty for their blasphemies.

C.102 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:71-92)

Allah works in His world-in mercy
For His servants, and in just punishment
For those who do wrong. Thus was it
In Noah's story, for he worked unselfishly
For his people, though rejected by them.
So was it with Moses; he preached
To Pharaoh and the Egyptian; but most
Of them preferred falsehood and pride
To the Truth of Allah, and perished. Even
Pharaoh's confession of Allah at the last
Was too late, as his life had been spent
In luxury, pride, and oppression.

Section 8

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ ...

71. Relate to them the story of Noah.

C1456. The reference to Noah's story here is only incidental, to illustrate a special point. The fuller story will be found in 11:25-48, and in many other passages,

e.g., 7:59-64, 23:23-32, 26:105-122, and 37:75-82.

At each place there is a special point in the context.

The special point here is that Noah's very life and preaching among his wicked people was a cause of offence to them. But he feared nothing, trusted in Allah, delivered his message, and was saved from the Flood.

... إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ...

Behold! he said to his People:

...يَا قَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُم مَّقَامِي وَتَذْكِيرِي بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ فَعَلَى اللّهِ

...تَوَكَّلْتُ

"O my People! if it be hard on your (mind) that I should stay (with you) and commemorate the Signs of Allah -- yet I put my trust in Allah.

...فَأَجْمِعُواْ أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءكُمْ

Get ye then an agreement about your plan and among your Partners,

...ثُمَّ لاَ يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً

so your plan be not to you dark and dubious.

C1457. Firm in his sense of Truth from Allah. Noah plainly told his people to condemn him to death if they liked, openly and in concert, so that he should at least know who would listen to his Message and who would not. He wanted them to be frank and direct, for he feared nothing.

...ثُمَّ اقْضُواْ إِلَيَّ وَلاَ تُنظِرُونِ (٧١)

Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite.

فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُم مِّنْ أَجْرٍ ...

72. "But if ye turn back, (consider): no reward have I asked of you:

C1458. The Prophet of Allah preaches for the good of his people. But he claims no reward from them, but on the contrary is reviled, persecuted, banished, and often slain.

... إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلاَّ عَلَى اللّهِ...

my reward is only due from Allah,

...وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٧٢)

and I have been commanded to be of those who submit to Allah's Will (in Islam)."

...فَكَذَّبُوهُ

73. They rejected him,

...فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَمَن مَّعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ...

but We delivered him, and those with him, in the Ark, and We made them inherit (the earth),

...وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا...

while We overwhelmed in the Flood those who rejected Our Signs.

C1459. Cf. 7:64.

...فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (٧٣)

Then see what was the end of those who were warned (but heeded not)!

...ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِ رُسُلاً إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ...

74. Then after him We sent (many) Messengers to their Peoples:

...فَجَاؤُوهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ...

they brought them Clear Signs,

...فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا بِهِ مِن قَبْلُ...

but they would not believe what they had already rejected beforehand.

C1460. I understand the meaning to be that there is a sort of spiritual an influence descending from generation to generation, among the Unbelievers as among the men of Faith.

In history we find the same problems in many ages, - denial of Allah's grace, defiance of Allah's law, rejection of Allah's Message.

These influences cause the hearts of the contumacious to be sealed and impervious to the Truth Cf. 2:7 and notes.

What they do is to prejudge the issues even before the Prophet explains them.

...كَذَلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (٧٤)

Thus do We seal the hearts of the transgressors.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِم مُّوسَى وَهَارُونَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ بِآيَاتِنَا...

75. Then after them sent We Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our Signs.

C1461. The story of Moses, Aaron, and Pharaoh is fully told in 7:103-137, and there are references to it in many places in the Quran.

The incidental reference here is to illustrate a special point, viz., that

- the wicked are arrogant and bound up in their sin, and prefer deception to Truth:
- they do not hesitate to charge the men of Allah, who work unselfishly for them, with mean motives, such as would actuate them in similar circumstances!

...فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ (٧٥)

But they were arrogant: they were a people in sin.

فَلَمَّا جَاءهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِندِنَا قَالُوا إِنَّ هَـذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٦)

76. When the Truth did come to them from Us, they said:

"This is indeed evident sorcery!"

...قَالَ مُوسَى أَتَقُولُونَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءكُمْ أَسِحْرٌ هَـذَا

77. Said Moses: "Say ye (this) about the Truth when it hath (actually) reached you?

Is sorcery (like) this?

...وَلاَ يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُونَ (٧٧)

But sorcerers will not prosper."

C1462. Sorcery is the very opposite of Truth, being deception of plausible shows by the powers of evil. But these cannot succeed or last permanently, and Truth must ultimately prevail.

...قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِتَلْفِتَنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءنَا

78. They said: "Hast thou come to us to turn us a way from the ways We found our fathers following --

...وَتَكُونَ لَكُمَا الْكِبْرِيَاء فِي الأَرْضِ ...

in order that thou and thy brother may have greatness in the land?

C1463. Notice how they attribute evil motives to the men of Allah, motives of ambition and lust of power, which the men of Allah had been sent expressly to put down. The same device was used against Al-Mustafa.

... وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمَا بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٧٨)

But not we shall believe in you!"

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ائْتُونِي بِكُلِّ سَاحِرٍ عَلِيمٍ (٧٩)

79. Said Pharaoh: "Bring me every sorcerer well-versed."

فَلَمَّا جَاء السَّحَرَةُ قَالَ لَهُم مُّوسَى أَلْقُواْ مَا أَنتُم مُّلْقُونَ (٨٠)

80. When the sorcerers came, Moses said to them:
"Throw ye what ye (wish) to throw!"

... فَلَمَّا أَلْقَواْ قَالَ مُوسَى

81. When they had their throw, Moses said:

C1464. When they threw their rods, the rods became snakes by a trick of sorcery, but Moses' miracles were greater than any tricks of sorcery, and had real Truth behind them.

... مَا جِئْتُم بِهِ السِّحْرُ...

"What ye have brought is sorcery:

...إِنَّ اللّهَ سَيُبْطِلُهُ...

Allah will surely make it of no effect:

...إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٨١)

for Allah prospereth not the work of those who make mischief.

وَيُحِقُّ اللّهُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٨٢)

82. "And Allah by His Words doth prove and establish His truth, however much the Sinners may hate it!"

C1465. Allah's Words or Commands have real power, while Sorcerers' tricks only seem wonderful by deceiving the eye.

Section 9

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَى إِلاَّ ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّن قَوْمِهِ عَلَى خَوْفٍ...

83. But none believed in Moses except some children of his People, because of the fear

C1466. The pronoun **"his"** in "his People" is taken by some Commentators to refer to Pharaoh.

The Majority Of Pharaoh's people refused to believe at the time, but the sorcerers believed (7:120), and so did Pharaoh's wife (66:11), and ultimately Pharaoh himself, though too late (10:90).

If we took "his" to refer to Moses, it would mean that the Israelites were hard-hearted and grumbled (7:129) even when they were being delivered from Egypt, and only a few of them had any real faith in Allah's providence and the working of His Law, and they feared Pharaoh even more than they feared Allah.

...مِّن فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِمْ أَن يَفْتِنَهُمْ...

of Pharaoh and his chiefs, lest they should persecute them;

...وَإِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الأَرْضِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (٨٣)...

and certainly Pharaoh was mighty on the earth and one who transgressed all bounds.

وَقَالَ مُوسَى يَا قَوْمِ إِن كُنتُمْ آمَنتُم بِاللّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُواْ إِن كُنتُم مُّسْلِمِينَ (٨٤)

84. Moses said:

"O my People! if ye do (really) believe in Allah, then in Him put your trust if ye submit (your will to His)."

فَقَالُواْ عَلَى اللّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا...

85. They said:

"In Allah do we put our trust.

...رَبَّنَا لاَ تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٨٥)

Our Lord! make us not a trial for those who practice oppression;

C1467. A trial for those who practice oppression: the various meanings of **Fitnah** have been explained in n. 1198 to 8:25.

The prayer is that the righteous people, being weak, should be saved from being used as objects of oppression or punishment at the hands of powerful enemies. Weakness tempts Power to practice oppression, and is thus an occasion of trial for the oppressors.

وَنَجِّنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (٨٦)

86. "And deliver us by Thy Mercy from those who reject (Thee)."

...وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى وَأَخِيهِ أَن تَبَوَّءَا لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوتًا...

87. We inspired Moses and his brother with this message:

"Provide dwellings for your People in Egypt,

C1468. This instruction, we may suppose, was given when the sorcerers were brought to faith, and some of the Egyptians believed. Moses was for a little while to remain in Egypt, so that his Message should have time to work, before the Israelites were led out of Egypt.

They were to make their houses into places of prayer (Qiblah), as Pharaoh would not probably allow them to set up public places of prayer. and they were now to be only sojourners in Egypt.

These were the glad tidings (the Gospel) of Islam, which was preached under Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and completed under Muhammad.

...وَاجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلاَةَ...

make your dwellings into places of worship,

and establish regular prayers:

...وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨٧)

and give Glad Tidings to those who believe!"

وَقَالَ مُوسَى...

88. Moses prayed:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلأَهُ زِينَةً وَأَمْوَالاً فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

"Our Lord! Thou hast indeed bestowed on Pharaoh and his Chiefs splendor and wealth in the life of the Present,

C1469. Moses' prayer, in which Aaron joined, for he was always with him, may be paraphrased thus:

"O Allah!

we understand that the glitter and the wealth of the Egyptians are not to be envied. They are but the ephemeral goods of this life. They are a disadvantage, in that in their pride of possessions the Egyptians mislead themselves and others. Let their pride be their undoing! Turn their wealth into bitterness and their hearts into hardness, for they reject Thee, and they will not believe until they actually see the Punishment of their sins!"

رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِكَ...

and so, our Lord, they mislead (men) from Thy Path.

رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَى أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلاَ يُؤْمِنُواْ...

Deface, our Lord, the features of their wealth, and send hardness to their hearts, so they will not believe

C1470. A terrible curse! Let their wealth and splendour become so defaced in their features, that instead of being objects of desire, they become objects of loathing!

The heart is the seat of affections and joy: let it be so hardened by their unbelief that it becomes the seat of hatred and grief! It is when they see the Penalty that they will believe!

حَتَّى يَرَوُاْ الْعَذَابَ الأَلِيمَ (٨٨)...

until they see the grievous Penalty."

قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَت دَّعْوَتُكُمَا...

89. Allah said: "Accepted is your prayer (O Moses and Aaron)!

...فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلاَ تَتَّبِعَآنِّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٨٩)

So stand ye straight, and follow not the path of those who know not."

C1471. Be not dazzled by their splendour, but stand out straight for Truth, for that is your salvation!

Addressed in form to Moses and Aaron, in substance it is addressed to the Israelites,

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ...

90. We took the Children of Israel across the sea:

...فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعَدْوًا... ...

Pharaoh and his hosts followed them in insolence and spite.

C1472. Notice the swiftness of the action in the narrative. The execution of poetic justice could not have been described in fewer words.

...حَتَّى إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ...

At length, when overwhelmed with the flood, he said:

...آمَنتُ أَنَّهُ لا إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ الَّذِي آمَنَتْ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ...

"I believe that there is no god except Him Whom the Children of Israel believe in:

C1473. That is, in the One True God.

This was death-bed repentance, and even so it was forced by the terror of the catastrophe. So it was not accepted (cf. 4:18) in its entirety.

Only the body was saved from the sea, and presumably, according to Egyptian custom, it was embalmed and the mummy was given due rites of the dead. But the story commemorated for ever Allah's working, in mercy for His people, and in just punishment of oppressors.

...وَأَنَاْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٩٠)

I am of those who submit (to Allah in Islam)."

آلآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٩١)

91. (It was said to him): "Ah now! -- but a little while before, wast thou in rebellion! -- and thou didst mischief (and violence)!

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ آيَةً...

92. "This day shall We save thee in thy body, that thou mayest be a Sign to those who come after thee!

...وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا لَغَافِلُونَ (٩٢)

But verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our Signs!"

C.103 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(10:93-109)

Allah's purpose of Mercy and Forgiveness
Was shown in the mission of Jonah, when
Nineveh was pardoned on repentance, and given
A new lease of life. We must
Be patient and strive with constancy and purveyance.
For all suffering and sorrow as well as
All bounties proceed from Allah, Whose plan
Is righteous and for the good of His creatures.

Section 10

...وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مُبَوَّأَ صِدْقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ

93. We settled the Children of Israel in a beautiful dwelling-place, and provided for them sustenance of the best:

C1474. After many wanderings the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan, described as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. 3:8).

They had a prosperous land; and they were supplied with spiritual sustenance by men sent to deliver Allah's Message.

They should have known better than to fall into disputes and schisms, but they did so. This was all the more inexcusable considering what bounties they had received from Allah. The schisms arose from selfish arrogance, and Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment.

...فَمَا اخْتَلَفُواْ حَتَّى جَاءهُمُ الْعِلْمُ...

it was after knowledge had been granted to them, that they fell into schisms.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُواْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٩٣)

Verily Allah will judge between them as to the schisms amongst them, on the Day of Judgment.

فَإِن كُنتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَاسْأَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَؤُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكَ...

94. If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee:

C1475. Allah's Truth is all one, and even in different forms men sincere in Religion recognise the oneness.

So sincere Jews like 'Abdullah ibn Salam, and sincere Christians like Waraqa or the Nestorian monk Bahira, were ready to recognise the mission of Muhammad Al-Mustafa.

"The Book" in this connection is Revelation generally, including pre-Islamic revelations.

...لَقَدْ جَاءكَ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (٩٤)

the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord:

so be in nowise of those in doubt.

C1476. Cf. 3:60 and n. 399.

وَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِ اللّهِ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٩٥)

95. Nor be of those who reject the Signs of Allah, or thou shalt be of those who perish.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٩٦)

96. Those against whom the Word of thy Lord hath been verified would not believe --

C1477. Allah has given frequent warnings against Evil and want of Faith in all ages, through Signs and through inspiration, -the latter **"the Word"** being even more direct and personal than the former.

Those who did not heed the warning found to their cost that it was true, and they perished. Such contumacy in the rejection of Truth only yields when the actual penalty is in sight. Belief then is induced by irresistible facts: it is not efficacious as Faith, as was proved against Pharaoh, See 10:90 and n. 1473.

وَلَوْ جَاءتْهُمْ كُلُّ آيَةٍ حَتَّى يَرَوُاْ الْعَذَابَ الأَلِيمَ (٩٧)

97. Even if every Sign was brought unto them -- until they see (for themselves) the Penalty Grievous.

فَلَوْلاَ كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلاَّ قَوْمَ يُونُسَ...

98. Why was there not a single township (among those We warmed), which believed -- so its Faith should have profited it -- except the people of Jonah?

C1478. Allah in His infinite Mercy points out the contumacy of Sin as a warning, and the exceptional case of Nineveh and its Prophet Jonah is alluded to.

The story of Jonah is told in 37:139-148, which would be an appropriate place for further comments.

Here it is sufficient to note that Nineveh was a very ancient town which is now no longer on the map. Its site is believed to be marked by the two mounds on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite the flourishing city of Mosul on the right bank, about 230 miles north- north-west of Baghdad. One of the mounds bears the name of "the Tomb of Nabi Yunus."

Archeologists have not yet fully explored its antiquities. But it is clear that it was a very old Sumerian town, perhaps older than 3500 B.C. It became the capital of Assyria. The first Assyrian Empire under Shalmaneser 1, about 1300 B.C., became the supreme power in Western Asia.

Babylon, whose tributary Assyria had formerly been, now became tributary to Assyria. The second Assyrian Empire arose about 745 B.C., and Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) beautified the town with many Public Works. It was destroyed by the Scythians (so-called Medes) in 612 B.C.

If the date of Jonah were assumed to be about 800 B.C., it would be between the First and the Second Assyrian Empire; when the City was nearly destroyed for its sins, but on account of its repentance was given a new lease of glorious life in the Second Empire.

...لَمَّآ آمَنُواْ كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

When they believed, We removed from them the Penalty of Ignominy in the life of the Present,

...وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَى حِينٍ (٩٨)

and permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while.

C1479. The point of the allusion here may be thus explained. Nineveh was a great and glorious City. But it became, like Babylon, a city of sin. Allah sent the prophet Yunus (Jonah) to warn it.

Full of iniquities though it was, it listened to the warning, perhaps in the person of a few just men. For their sakes, the All-Merciful Allah spared it, and gave it a new lease of glorious life.

According to the chronology in the last note the new lease would be for about two centuries, after which it perished completely for its sins and abominations.

Note that its new lease of life was for its collective life as a City, the life of the Present, i.e., of this World. It does not mean that individual sinners escaped the spiritual consequences of their sin, unless they individually repented and obtained Allah's mercy and forgiveness.

...وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لآمَنَ مَن فِي الأَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيعًا...

99. If it had been the Lord's Will, they would all have believed -- all who are on earth!

...أَفَأَنتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَكُونُواْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٩٩)

Wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!

C1480. If it had been Allah's Plan or Will not to grant the limited Free-will that He has granted to man, His omnipotence could have made all mankind alike: all would then have had Faith, but that Faith would have reflected no merit on them.

In the actual world as it is, man has been endowed with various faculties and capacities, so that he should strive and explore, and bring himself into harmony with Allah's Will. Hence Faith becomes a moral achievement, and to resist Faith becomes a sin.

As a complementary proposition, men of Faith must not be impatient or angry if they have to contend against Unfaith, and most important of all, they must guard against the temptation of forcing Faith, i.e., imposing it on others by physical compulsion or any other forms of compulsion such as social pressure, or inducements held out by wealth or position, or other adventitious advantages.

Forced faith is no faith. They should strive spiritually and let Allah's Plan work as He wills.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَن تُؤْمِنَ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ...

100. No soul can believe, except by the Will of Allah,

C1481. To creatures endued with Will, Faith comes out of an active use of that Will. But we must not be so arrogant as to suppose that that is enough. At best man is weak, and is in need of Allah's grace and help.

If we sincerely wish to understand. He will help our Faith; but if not, our doubts and difficulties will only be increased. This follows as a necessary consequence, and in Quranic language all consequences are ascribed to Allah.

...وَيَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٠٠)

and He will place Doubt (or obscurity) on those who will not understand.

C1482. Rijs (from rajisa, yarjasu, or rajusa, yarjusu) has various meanings: e.g,

- filth, impurity, uncleanness, abomination, as in 9:95;
- hence, filthy deeds, foul conduct, crime, abomination, thus shading off into previous, as in 5:93;
- hence punishment for crime, penalty, as in 6:125;
- a form of such punishment, viz., doubt, obscurity, or unsettlement of mind, anger, indignation, as in 9:125, and here, but perhaps the idea of punishment is also implied here.

قُلِ انظُرُواْ مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

101. Say: "Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth;"

...وَمَا تُغْنِي الآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَن قَوْمٍ لاَّ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠١)

but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not.

C1483. If Faith results from an active exertion of our spiritual faculties or understanding, it follows that if we let these die, Allah's Signs in His Creation or in the spoken Word which comes by inspiration through the mouths of His Messengers will not reach us any more than music reaches a deaf man.

فَهَلْ يَنتَظِرُونَ إِلاَّ مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْاْ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

102. Do they then expect (anything) but (what happened in) the days of the men who passed away before them?

...قُلْ فَانتَظِرُواْ إِنِّي مَعَكُم مِّنَ الْمُنتَظِرِينَ (١٠٢)

Say: "Wait ye then: for I too, will wait with you."

C1484. Cf. 10:20 and n. 1408.

The argument about Allah's revelation of Himself to man was begun in those early sections of this Sura and is being now rounded off towards the end of this Sura with the same formula.

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ...

103. In the end We deliver Our Messengers and those who believe:

...كَذَلِكَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنجِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠٣)

thus is it fitting on Our part that We should deliver those who believe!

Section 11

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّن دِينِي فَلاَ أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ

مِن دُونِ اللّهِ...

104. Say: "O ye men!

if ye are in doubt as to my religion, (behold!) I worship not what ye worship, other than Allah!

C1485. Other people may hesitate, or doubt, or wonder. But the righteous man has no doubt in his own mind, and he declares his Faith clearly and unambiguously to all, as did Al-Mustafa.

...وَلَـكِنْ أَعْبُدُ اللّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ...

But I worship Allah -- Who will take your souls (at death):

C1486. The worship of the One and True God is not a fancy worship, to be arrived at merely by reasoning and philosophy. It touches the vital issues of life and death- which are in His hands and His alone.

...وَأُمِرْتُ ...

I am commanded

C1487. Nor is the worship of One God an invention of the Prophet. It comes as a direct command through him and to all.

... أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠٤)

to be (in the ranks) of the Believers.

C1488. Individual Faith is good, but it is completed and strengthened by joining or forming a Righteous Society, in which the individual can develop and expand.

Islam was never a religion of monks and anchorites. It laid great stress on social duties, which in many ways test and train the individual's character.

وَأَنْ أَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا وَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٠٥)

105. "And further (thus): 'Set thy face towards Religion with true piety, and never in anywise be of the Unbelievers;

وَلاَ تَدْعُ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ مَا لاَ يَنفَعُكَ وَلاَ يَضُرُّكَ...

106. "Nor call on any, other than Allah -- such will neither profit thee nor hurt thee:

...فَإِن فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذًا مِّنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٠٦)

if thou dost, Behold! thou shalt certainly be of those who do wrong."

وَإِن يَمْسَسْكَ اللّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلاَ كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلاَّ هُوَ...

107. If Allah do touch thee with hurt, there is none can remove it but He:

...وَإِن يُرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلاَ رَآدَّ لِفَضْلِهِ...

if He do design some benefit for thee, there is none can keep back His favor:

...يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ...

He causeth it to reach whomsoever of His servants He pleaseth.

...وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٠٧)

And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C1489. Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Even when we suffer under trials and tribulations, it is for our good, and no one can remove them except He, when, in His Plan. He sees it to be best for all concerned.

On the other hand, there is no power that can intercept His blessings and favours, and His bounty flows freely when we are worthy, and often when we are not worthy of it.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءكُمُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ...

108. Say: "O ye men! now Truth hath reached you from your Lord!

...فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ...

Those who receive guidance, do so for the good of their own souls;

...وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا...

those who stray, do so to their own loss:

...وَمَا أَنَاْ عَلَيْكُم بِوَكِيلٍ (١٠٨)

and I am not (set) over you to arrange your affairs."

C1490. The Furqan, the Criterion between right and wrong, has been sent to us from Allah. If we accept guidance, it is not as if we confer favours on those who bring us guidance. They suffer unselfishly for us, in order that we may be guided for our own good.

On the other hand, if we reject it, it is our own loss. We have a certain amount of free-will, and the responsibility is ours and cannot be shifted to the Prophets sent by Allah.

...وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيْكَ وَاصْبِرْ حَتَّىَ يَحْكُمَ اللّهُ...

109. Follow thou the inspiration sent unto thee,

and be patient and constant, till Allah doth decide:

...وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (١٠٩)

for He is the Best to decide

C1491. When, in spite of all the efforts of the Prophets of Allah, people do not accept Truth, and evil seems to flourish for a time, we must wait and be patient, but at the same time we must not give up hope or persevering effort. For thus only can we carry out our part in the Plan of Allah.

رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ

"O my Lord! I do seek refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Hud

هُود

Introduction and Summary

For the chronological place of this Surah and the general argument of Surahs 10-15 see Introduction to Surah 10.

In subject matter this Surah supplements the preceding one. In the last Surah stress was laid on that side of Allah's dealings with man which leans to Mercy; here stress is laid on the side which deals with justice and the punishment of Sin when all Grace is resisted.

Summery: Allah's revelation of mercy, His dealing with man, and His long-suffering patience are contrasted with man's

ingratitude, his love of falsehood and vanity, and his crookedness (11:1-24, and C. 104).

Noah's unselfishness and humility in teaching his people the Truth of Allah were traduced by the ungodly, and his Message ridiculed and rejected. But he built his Ark under directions from Allah, and was saved, with peace and blessings, while his rejecters perished (11:25-49, and C. 105).

The prophet Hud preached to his people, the 'Ad, against false gods, and the prophet Salih to his people, the Thamud, against dishonouring the symbol of Allah's bounty. In both cases Allah's Signs were rejected, and the rejecters were blotted out (11:50-68, and C. 106).

Lut's people were given to abomination; Abraham pleaded for them, and Lut was sent out to them, but they went deeper and deeper into sin and suffered the Penalty. Shu'ayb's people the Midianites, were warned against fraud and mischief, but they reproached him with helplessness and were themselves destroyed (11:69-95, and C. 107).

It is arrogant leaders like Pharaoh who mislead men, and men bring ruin on themselves. But Allah is Just. The penalty for sin is real and abiding; therefore shun all wrongdoing, and serve Allah wholeheartedly (11:96-123, and C. 108).

C.104 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:1-24)

Allah's Revelation teaches the Truth; it warns
Against wrong and gives glad tidings to the righteous;
Ungrateful man folds up his heart
And fails to see how all Nature points
To Allah and to the Hereafter: he but seeks
Petty issues, forgetting the Cause of Causes.
Not all the wisdom of man can produce
Aught like the Message which comes from Allah,

As the Light that leads and the Mercy
That forgives. Who then but will humble
Himself before Allah, seeking His light and His voice?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الر...

1. Alif Lam Ra.

C1492. For these mystic letters, see Introduction to Surah 10.

...كِتَابٌ أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ...

(This is) a Book, with verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning) --

C1493. See n. 347 to 3:7.

Every basic principle is included in Allah's Revelation, and it is further illustrated and explained in detail.

...ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ (١)

further explained in detail -- from One Who is Wise and Well-Acquainted (with all things):

...أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُوا إِلاَّ اللَّهَ

2. (It teacheth) that ye should worship none but Allah.

...إِنَّنِي لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ (٢)

(Say:) "Verily I am (sent) unto you from Him to warn and to bring glad tidings:

C1494. Al-Mustafa's Message-as was the Message of all apostles-was to warn against evil, and to bring the glad tidings of Allah's Mercy and Grace to all who would receive it in Faith and trust in Allah.

This double Message is preached illustratively in this Surah.

وَأَنِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ...

3. ("And to preach thus), 'Seek ye the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance;

...يُمَتِّعْكُم مَّتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

that He may grant you enjoyment, good (and true), for a term appointed,

...وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ...

and bestow His abounding grace on all who abound in merit!

C1495. The enjoyment of all good and true things in life refers,

I think, to the present life with its limited term, and the abounding Grace refers to the higher reward, which begins here but is completed in the life to come.

...وَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ (٣)

But if ye turn away, then I fear for you the Penalty of a Great Day:

إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٤)

4. "'To Allah is your return, and He hath power over all things.'"

أَلا إِنَّهُمْ يَثْنُونَ صُدُورَهُمْ لِيَسْتَخْفُوا مِنْهُ...

5. Behold! they fold up their hearts, that they may lie hid from Him!

C1496. The heart (literally breast in Arabic) is already well guarded in the body; and secrets are supposed to be hidden in the heart or breast.

Foolish persons might further cover up their hearts with cloaks, but even so, nothing can be hidden from Allah.

...أَلا حِينَ يَسْتَغْشُونَ ثِيَابَهُمْ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ...

Ah! even when they cover themselves with their garments, He knoweth what they conceal, and what they reveal:

...إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٥)

for He knoweth well the (inmost secrets) of the hearts.

C1497. Cf. 3:119.

وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ فِي الأَرْضِ إِلاَّ عَلَى اللّهِ رِزْقُهَا...

6. There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance dependeth on Allah:

C1498. Cf. 6:59.

Nothing happens in Creation except by the Word of Allah and with the knowledge of Allah. Not a leaf stirs but by His Will, Its maintenance in every sense is dependent on His Will.

...وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ...

He knoweth the time and place of its temporary deposit:

C1499. Mustaqarr: definite abode; where a thing stops or stays for some time, where it is established.

Mustauda: where a thing is laid up or deposited for a little while. Referring to animals,

- the former denotes its life on this earth;
- the latter its temporary pre-natal existence in the egg or the womb and its after-death existence in the tomb or whatever state it is in until its resurrection.

... كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٦)

all is in a clear Record.

C1500. Cf. 6:59 and n. 880, and 10:61 and n. 1450.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ...

7. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days --

C1501. See n. 1031 to 7:54.

...وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاء ...

and His Throne was over the Waters --

C1502. It is scientifically correct to say that all life was evolved out of the waters, and this statement also occurs in the Quran, 21:30.

Some such meaning, I think, also attaches to the Gen. 1:2.

The past tense "was" refers to the time before life developed in solid forms, on land and in air. (R).

... لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً...

that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct.

C1503. The Creation we see around us is not idle sport or play (in Hindi, Lila) or whim on the part of Allah. It is the medium through which our spiritual life is to develop, with such free-will as we have.

This life is our testing time.

...وَلَئِن قُلْتَ إِنَّكُم مَّبْعُوثُونَ مِن بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ...

But if thou wert to say to them, "Ye shall indeed be raised up after death,"

...لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ إِنْ هَـذَا إِلاَّ سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧)

the Unbelievers would be sure to say, "This is nothing but obvious sorcery!"

C1504. The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future life, think all talk of it is like a sorcerer's talk, empty of reality. But in this they show their ignorance, and they are begging the question.

وَلَئِنْ أَخَّرْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ إِلَى أُمَّةٍ مَّعْدُودَةٍ لَّيَقُولُنَّ مَا يَحْبِسُهُ...

8. If We delay the Penalty for them for a definite term, they are sure to say, "What keeps it back?"

C1505. As much as to say: "Oh! all this talk of punishment is nonsense. There is no such thing!"

...أَلاَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُواْ بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (٨)

Ah! on the day it (actually) reaches them, nothing will turn it away from them, and they will be completely encircled by that which they used to mock at!

Section 2

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَا الإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَيَئُوسٌ كَفُورٌ (٩)

9. if We give man a taste of mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, behold! he is in despair and (falls into) blasphemy.

C1506. He does not realise that some kinds of chastening are good for discipline and the training of our spiritual faculties.

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نَعْمَاء بَعْدَ ضَرَّاء مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي...

10. But if We give him a taste of (Our) favors after adversity hath touched him, He is sure to say,

"All evil has departed from me;"

C1507. He takes it as a matter of course, or as due to his own merit or cleverness!

He does not realise that both in good and ill fortune there is a beneficent purpose in the Plan of Allah.

...إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ (١٠)

Behold! he falls into exultation and pride.

... إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ

11. Not so do those who show patience and constancy, and work righteousness;

C1508. Their attitude is the right one: to take ill-fortune with fortitude and good fortune with humility, and in either case go on persevering in good deeds to their fellow-creatures.

... أُوْلَـئِكَ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (١١)

for them is forgiveness (of sins) and a great reward.

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيْكَ...

12. Perchance thou mayest (feel the inclination) to give up a part of what is revealed unto thee,

C1509. Every Prophet of Allah, when he not only encounters opposition, but is actually accused of falsehood and those very evils which he is protesting against, may feel inclined, in his human weakness, to ask himself the question.

"Supposing I omit this little point, will Allah's Truth then be accepted more readily?

Or he may think to himself,

"If I had only more money to organize my campaign, or something which will draw people's attention, like the company of an angel, how much better can I push my Message?"

He is told that truth must be delivered as it is revealed, even though portions of it may be unpalatable, and that resources and other means to draw people to him are beside the point. He must use just such resources and opportunities as he has, and leave the rest to Allah.

...وَضَآئِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَن يَقُولُواْ لَوْلاَ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنزٌ أَوْ جَاء مَعَهُ

...مَلَكٌ

and thy heart feeleth straitened lest they say,

"Why is not a treasure sent down unto him, or why does not an angel come down with him?

...إِنَّمَا أَنتَ نَذِيرٌ...

But thou art there only to warn!

...وَاللّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (١٢)...

It is Allah that arrangeth all affairs!

...أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ...

13. Or they may say, "He forged it."

...قُلْ فَأْتُواْ بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ...

Say, "Bring ye then ten Surahs forged, like unto it,

...وَادْعُواْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٣)

and call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than Allah! -- if ye speak the truth!

C1510. Cf. 2:23 and 10:38.

فَإِلَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُواْ لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُواْ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللّهِ...

14. "If then they (your false gods) answer not your (call),

know ye that this Revelation is sent down (replete) with the knowledge of Allah,

...وَأَن لاَّ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (١٤)

and that there is no god but He!

Will ye even then submit (to Islam)?"

مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا...

15. Those who desire the life of the Present and its glitter -- to them We shall pay (the price of) their deeds therein --

...وَهُمْ فِيهَا لاَ يُبْخَسُونَ (١٥)

without diminution.

C1511. If worldly men desire the glitter of this world, they shall have it in full measure, but it is false glitter, and it involves the negation of that spiritual life which comes from the guidance of the inner light and from the revelation of Allah, as described in verse 17 below.

أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ إِلاَّ النَّارُ...

16. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire:

...وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُواْ فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦)

vain are the designs they frame therein,

and of no effect are the deeds that they do!

أَفَمَن كَانَ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ...

17. Can they be (like) those who accept a Clear (Sign) from their Lord, and whom a witness from Himself doth teach,

C1512. "A witness from Himself': i.e., the Book which was given to Al-Mustafa, the Holy Quran, which is compared to the original Revelation given to Moses. We make no difference between one true and genuine Message and another, nor between one apostle and another, for they all come from the One True God.

...وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً...

as did the Book of Moses before it -- a guide and a mercy?

C1513. "Guide": the Arabic word here is **Imam**, a leader, a guide, one that directs to the true Path. Such a direction is an instance of the Mercy and Goodness of Allah to man.

The Quran and the Prophet Muhammad are also called, each, a Guide and a Mercy, and so are these epithets applicable to previous Books and Prophets.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ...

They believe therein;

...وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ الأَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهُ...

but those of the Sects that reject it -- the Fire will be their promised meeting place.

...فَلاَ تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ...

Be not then in doubt thereon:

...إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٧)

for it is the Truth from thy Lord: yet many among men do not believe!

...وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللّهِ كَذِبًا

18. Who doth more wrong than those who invent a lie against Allah?

...أُوْلَـئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الأَشْهَادُ هَـؤُلاء الَّذِينَ كَذَبُواْ عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ...

They will be turned back to the presence of their Lord, and the witnesses will say,

"These are the ones who lied against their Lord!

...أَلاَ لَعْنَةُ اللّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ (١٨)

Behold! the Curse of Allah is on those who do wrong! --

الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا...

19. "Those who would hinder (men) from the path of Allah and would seek in it something crooked:

...وَهُم بِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (١٩)

these were they who denied the Hereafter!

C1514. Cf. 7:45.

أُولَـئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُواْ مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاء...

20. They will in nowise frustrate (His design) on earth,

nor have they protectors besides Allah!

...يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ...

Their Penalty will be doubled!

C1515. Cf. 7:38.

In this context, it is implied that they committed a two-fold wrong:

1. in inventing falsehoods against Allah, which deadened their own soul, and
2. in leading others astray or hindering them from Allah's path.

   Thus they lost the faculty of hearing, which they might have used to hear the Word of Allah, and they blinded the faculty of sight by shutting out Allah's light.

...مَا كَانُواْ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُواْ يُبْصِرُونَ (٢٠)

They lost the power to hear, and they did not see!

أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ (٢١)

21. They are the ones who have lost their own souls:

and the (fancies) they invented have left them in the lurch!

لاَ جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ هُمُ الأَخْسَرُونَ (٢٢)

22. Without a doubt, these are the very ones who will lose most in the Hereafter!

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَخْبَتُواْ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ...

23. But those who believe and work righteousness, and humble themselves before their Lord --

C1516. Note that the humility is to be "before their Lord," i.e., in Allah's sight.

There is no virtue, quite the contrary, in rubbing our noses to the ground before men. We are not to be arrogant even before men because we are humble as in Allah's sight. Nor does true humility lose self-confidence; for that self-confidence arises from confidence in the support and help of Allah.

...أُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٣)

they will be Companions of the Garden,

to dwell therein for aye!

مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالأَعْمَى وَالأَصَمِّ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ...

24. These two kinds (of men) may be compared to the blind and deaf, and those who can see and hear well.

...هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلاً...

Are they equal when compared?

...أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٤)

Will ye not then take heed?

C.105 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:25-49)

Noah walked righteously and humbly
As in the sight of Allah. With unselfish
Love for his people he warned them

And taught them. But they did flout
And reject his Message with scorn
And insults. Allah gave him directions
To built an ark against the impending
Flood which was to purify the world
From Sin and Unrighteousness. In it
Were saved Noah and those who believed.
So were promised salvation and Allah's Peace,
And Blessings to the Righteous evermore.

Section 3

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢٥)

25. We sent Noah to his people (with a mission):
"I have come to you with a Clear Warning:

أَن لاَّ تَعْبُدُواْ إِلاَّ اللّهَ...

26. "That ye serve none but Allah:

...إِنِّيَ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٦)

verily I do fear for you the Penalty of a Grievous Day."

C1517. Noah's mission was to a wicked world, plunged in sin. The mission had a double character, as in the mission of all Prophets of Allah: it had to warn men against evil and call them to repentance, and it had to give them the glad tidings of Allah's Grace in case they turned back to Allah: it was a Guidance and Mercy.

فَقَالَ الْمَلأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن قَوْمِهِ...

27. But the Chiefs of the Unbelievers among his people said:

...مَا نَرَاكَ إِلاَّ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا...

"We see (in) thee nothing but a man like ourselves:

...وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ...

nor do we see that any follow thee but the meanest among us, in judgment immature:

...وَمَا نَرَى لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِن فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ (٢٧)

nor do we see in you (all) any merit above us:

in fact we think ye are liars!

C1518. The Unbelievers were impelled by three powerful human motives of evil to resist Grace:

1. jealousy of other men; they said, "Why, you are no better than ourselves," half perceiving the Prophet's superiority, and half ignoring it;
2. contempt of the weak and lowly, who are often better intellectually, morally, and spiritually; they said, "We cannot believe or do what these fellows, our inferiors in social rank, believe or do!";
3. arrogance and self-sufficiency, which is a vice cognate to 2, looked at from a different angle; they said, "We are really better than the lot of you!"

Now the claim made on behalf of Allah's Message attacked all these three attitudes. And all they could say against it was to abuse it impatiently, and call it a lie.

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي...

28. He said: "O my people!

see ye if (it be that) I have a Clear Sign from my Lord,

...وَآتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِهِ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ...

and that He hath sent Mercy unto me from His own Presence, but that the Mercy hath been obscured from your sight?

C1519. Noah's answer (like that of the Prophet of Allah who spoke in later ages in Makkah and Madinah is a pattern of humility, gentleness, firmness, persuasiveness, truth, and love for his own people.

- First, he meekly (not exultingly) informs them that he has got a Message from Allah.
- Secondly, he tells them that it is a Message of Mercy even in its warning, though in their arrogance the Mercy may be hidden from them.

- Thirdly, he tells them plainly that there can be no compulsion in Religion: but will they not accept with goodwill what is for their own benefit?

He pleads with them as one of their own.

...أَنُلْزِمُكُمُوهَا وَأَنتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ (٢٨)

Shall we compel you to accept it when ye are averse to it?

...وَيَا قَوْمِ لا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالاً إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلاَّ عَلَى اللّهِ

29. "And O my People! I ask you for no wealth in return: my reward is from none but Allah:

C1520. The fourth point in Noah's address meets their accusation that he was a liar, implying that he was serving some selfish end of his own: on the contrary, he says, he seeks no reward from them but will bear any insults they heap on him, for he looks to Allah rather men.

But, fifthly if they insult the poor and needy who come to him in Faith, and think that he would send them away in order to attract the great ones of the land, he tells them plainly that they are mistaken.

In fact, (sixthly), he has no hesitation in telling the blunt truth that they are the ignorant ones, and not the poor who came to seek Allah's Truth!

...وَمَآ أَنَاْ بِطَارِدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ...

but I will not drive away (in contempt) those who believe:

...إِنَّهُم مُّلاَقُو رَبِّهِمْ وَلَـكِنِّيَ أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ (٢٩)

for verily they are to meet their Lord, and ye I see are the ignorant ones!

...وَيَا قَوْمِ مَن يَنصُرُنِي مِنَ اللّهِ إِن طَرَدتُّهُمْ

30. "And O my People! who would help me against Allah if I drove them away?

...أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٣٠)

Will ye not then take heed?

C1521. But (seventhly) again he pleads, with as much earnestness as ever, that he is one of themselves, and just doing his truest duty.

Would they have him do less?

Indeed, would they not themselves see the Truth and come into the goodly company of Believers?

وَلاَ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ ...

31. "I tell you not that

C1522. The eighth point that Noah urges is that he is not a mere vulgar soothsayer pretending to reveal secrets not worth knowing, nor an angel living in another world, with no ties to them. He is their real well-wisher, delivering a true Message from Allah.

... عِندِي خَزَآئِنُ اللّهِ ...

with me are the Treasures of Allah,

... وَلاَ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ...

nor do I know what is hidden,

C1523. Cf. 6:50 and n. 867.

...وَلاَ أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ...

nor claim I to be an angel.

...وَلاَ أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَن يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللّهُ خَيْرًا...

Nor yet do I say, of those whom your eyes do despise that Allah will not grant them (all) that is good:

C1524. But Noah will not close his argument without defending the men of Faith, whom the Chiefs despise because they are lacking in worldly goods.

He tells them plainly that Allah perhaps sees in them something in which they, the arrogant Chiefs, are lacking. Their spiritual faculties can only be appreciated truly by Him to Whom all the secrets of the spirit are open. But he, Noah, must declare boldly his own Faith, and this is the ninth point in his argument.

...اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ...

Allah knoweth best what is in their souls:

...إِنِّي إِذًا لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٣١)

I should, if I did, indeed be a wrongdoer."

...قَالُوا يَا نُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا

32. They said:

"O Noah! thou hast disputed with us, and (much) hast thou prolonged the dispute with us:

...فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٣٢)

now bring upon us what thou threatenest us with, if thou speakest the truth!"

C1525. To Noah's address the worldly Chiefs give a characteristic reply.

In its aggressive spirit it is the very antithesis of the gentle remonstrance of Noah. Because he had gently and patiently argued with them, they impatiently accuse him of "disputing with them" and "prolonging the dispute".

They are unable to deal with his points. So they arrogantly throw out their challenge, which is a compound of hectoring insolence, unreasoning skepticism, and biting irony.

"You foretell disaster to us if we don't mend our ways! Let us see you bring it on! Now, if you please! Or shall we have to call you a liar?"

قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ اللَّهُ إِن شَاءَ وَمَا أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٣٣)

33. He said:

"Truly, Allah will bring it on you if He wills -- and then, ye will not be able to frustrate it!

C1526. To the blasphemous challenge addressed to Noah his only answer could be:

> "I never claimed that I could punish you. All punishment is in the hands of Allah, and He knows best when His punishment will descend.

But this I can tell you! His punishment is sure if you do not repent, and when it comes, you will not be able to ward it off!"

وَلاَ يَنفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدتُّ أَنْ أَنصَحَ لَكُمْ إِن كَانَ اللّهُ يُرِيدُ أَن يُغْوِيَكُمْ...

34. "Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you (good) counsel, if it be that Allah willeth to leave you astray:

C1527. But Noah's heart bleeds for his people. They are preparing their own undoing! All his efforts are to be vain! Obstinate as they are, Allah's grace must be withdrawn, and then who can help them, and what use is any counsel?

But again he will try to remind them of their Lord, and turn their face to Him. For their ultimate return to His judgment-seat is certain, to answer for their conduct.

هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٤)...

He is your Lord! and to Him will ye return!"

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ...

35. Or do they say, "He has forged it?"

قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَيَّ إِجْرَامِي وَأَنَاْ بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُجْرَمُونَ (٣٥)...

Say: "If I had forged it, on me were my sin!

And I am free of the sins of which ye are guilty!

C1528. The fine narrative of dramatic power is here interrupted by a verse which shows that the story of Noah is also a Parable for the time and the ministry of Muhammad the Prophet.

The wonderful force and aptness of the story cannot be denied. The enemy therefore turns and says, "Oh! but you invented it!"

The answer is, "No! but it is Allah's own truth! You may be accustomed to dealing in falsehoods, but I protest that I am free from such sins."

The place of this verse here corresponds to the place of verse 49 at the end of the next Section.

While understanding this verse to refer to Al-Mustafa, as most of the accepted Commentators understand it, it is possible also, I think, to read it into the story of Noah, for all Prophets have similar spiritual experiences.

Section 4

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَى نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَن يُؤْمِنَ مِن قَوْمِكَ إِلاَّ مَن قَدْ آمَنَ...

36. It was revealed to Noah:

"None of thy people will believe except those who have believed already!

C1529. The story of Noah is resumed.

A point was reached, when it was clear that there was no hope of saving the sinners, who were courting their own destruction. It was to be a great Flood. So Noah was ordered to construct a great Ark or Ship, a heavy vessel to remain afloat in the Flood, so that the righteous could be saved in it.

...فَلاَ تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)

So grieve no longer over their (evil) deeds.

وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلاَ تُخَاطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ...

37. "But construct an Ark under Our eyes and Our inspiration, and address Me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin:

C1530. It was to be built under the special instructions of Allah, to serve the special purpose it was intended to serve.

...إِنَّهُم مُّغْرَقُونَ (٣٧)

for they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood)."

وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلْكَ وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلأٌ مِّن قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُواْ مِنْهُ...

38. Forthwith he starts constructing the Ark:

every time that the Chiefs of his People passed by him they threw ridicule on him.

C1531. The ridicule of the sinners, from their own point of view, was natural. Here was a Prophet turned carpenter! Here was a plain in the higher reaches of the Mesopotamian basin, drained by the majestic Tigris, over 800 to 900 miles from the sea Arabian Gulf in a straight line! Yet he talks of a flood like the Sea!

All material civilisations pride themselves on their Public Works and their drainage schemes. And here was a fellow relying on Allah! But did not their narrow pride seem ridiculous also to the Prophet of Allah!

Here were men steeped in sin and insolence! And they pit themselves against the power and the promise of Allah! Truly a contemptible race is man!

...قَالَ إِن تَسْخَرُواْ مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ (٣٨)

He said: "If ye ridicule us now, we (in our turn) can look down on you with ridicule likewise!

C1532. The Arabic Aorist may be construed either by the present tense or the future tense, and both make good sense here.

Following Zamakhshari, I construe in the present tense, because the future is so tragic for the sinners.

For the time being the worldly ones looked down on the Believers as they always do: but the Believers relied on Allah, and pitied their critics for knowing no better!- for their arrogance was really ridiculous.

فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَن يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٣٩)

39. "But soon will ye know who it is on whom will descend a Penalty that will cover them with shame -- will be unloosed a Penalty lasting."

...حَتَّى إِذَا جَاء أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ...

40. At length, behold! there came Our Command, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth!

C1533. Far at tannuru. Two interpretations have been given:

- the fountains or the springs on the surface of the earth bubbled over or gushed forth; or
- the oven boiled over.

The former has the weight of the best authority behind it and I prefer it.

Moreover, the same phrase occurs in 23:27, where it is a clause coordinated (as here) with the coming of Allah's Command.

These two passages may be compared with 54:11-12, where it is said that water poured forth from the skies and gushed forth from the springs.

This double action is familiar to any one who has seen floods on a large scale. The rain from above would saturate the great Ararat Plateau, and give great force to the springs and fountains in the valley of the Tigris below.

...قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِن كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ...

We said:

"Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female,

C1534. Zaujaini: the dual number refers to the two individuals in each pair of opposite sexes.

Some of the most authoritative Commentators (e.g., Imam Razi) construe in this sense, though others construe it to mean two pairs of each species.

...وَأَهْلَكَ إِلاَّ مَن سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ...

and your family -- except those against whom the Word has already gone forth -- and the Believers."

C1535. A disobedient and recalcitrant son (or step-son or grandson) of Noah is mentioned below (11:42-43, 45-56).

A member of the family, who breaks away from the traditions of the family in things that matter, ceases to share in the privileges of the family.

...وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلاَّ قَلِيلٌ (٤٠)

But only a few believed with him.

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُواْ فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا...

41. So he said:

"Embark ye on the Ark, in the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest!

...إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٤١)

For my Lord is, be sure, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!"

وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ...

42. So the Ark floated with them on the waves (towering) like mountains,

C1536. The simile of mountains applies to the waves, which were mountain high,- literally, for the peaks were being submerged.

...وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ...

and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (from the rest):

...يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَب مَّعَنَا وَلاَ تَكُن مَّعَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٤٢)

"O my son! embark with us, and be not with the Unbelievers!"

قَالَ سَآوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاء...

43. The son replied: "I will be take myself to some mountain: it will save me from the water."

C1537. The Unbelievers refuse to believe in Allah, but have great faith in material things! This young man was going to save himself on mountain peaks, not knowing that the peaks were themselves being submerged.

...قَالَ لاَ عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللّهِ إِلاَّ مَن رَّحِمَ...

Noah said: "This day nothing can save, from the Command of Allah, any but those on whom He hath mercy!" --

...وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ (٤٣)

and the waves came between them, and the son was among those over whelmed in the Flood.

... وَقِيلَ

44. When the word went forth:

C1538. A wonderful passage. The whole picture is painted in just a few words. The chain of material facts are linked together, not only in their relations to each other, but also in their relation to the spiritual forces that control them, and the spiritual consequences of Sin and wrong-doing.

The drowning in the material sense was the least part of the Penalty. A whole new world came into existence after the Deluge. (R).

... يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءكِ وَيَا سَمَاء أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاء...

"O earth! swallow up thy water, and O sky! withhold (thy rain)!"

and the water abated,

...وَقُضِيَ الأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ...

and the matter was ended. The Ark rested on Mount Judi

C1539. Let us get a little idea of the geography of the place. The letters J.B. and K are philologically interchangeable, and Judi, Gudi, Kudi are sounds that can pass into each other. There is no doubt that the name is connected with the name "Kurd", in which the letter r is a later interpolation, for the oldest Sumerian records name a people called Kuti or Gutu as holding the middle Tigris region not later than 2000 B.C. (see E.B., Kurdistan).

That region comprises the modern Turkish district of Bohtan, in which Jabal Judi is situated (near the frontiers of modern Turkey, modern Iraq, and modern Syria), and the town of Jazirat ibn 'Umar, (on the present Turco-Syrian frontier), and it extends into 'Iraq and Persia.

The great mountain mass of the Ararat plateau dominates this district. This mountain system "is unique

in the Old World in containing great sheets of water that are bitter lakes without outlets, Lake Van and Lake Urumiya being the chief' (E.B., Asia).

Such would be the very region for a stupendous Deluge if the usual scanty rainfall were to be changed into a very heavy downpour. A glacier damming of Lake Van in the Ice Age would have produced the same result. The region has many local traditions connected with Noah and the Flood.

The Biblical legend of Mount Ararat being the resting place of Noah's Ark is hardly plausible, seeing that the highest peak of Ararat is over 16,000 feet high. If it means one of the lower-peaks of the Ararat system, it agrees with the Muslim tradition about Mount Judi (or Gudi), and this is in accordance with the oldest and best local traditions. These traditions are accepted by Josephus, by the Nestorian Christians, and indeed by all the Eastern Christians and Jews, and they are the best in touch with local traditions. See (Viscount) J. Bryce, "Transcaucasia and Ararat," 4th ed., 1896. p. 216.

...وَقِيلَ بُعْداً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٤)

and the word went forth:

"Away with those who do wrong!"

...وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَّبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي

45. And Noah called upon his Lord, and said:

"O my Lord! surely my son is of my family!

...وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٤٥)

and Thy promise is true, and Thou art the Justest of Judges!"

...قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ

46. He said: "O Noah! he is not of thy family:

C1540. See n. 5135 above.

Like all Prophets of Allah, Noah was kind-hearted, but he is told that there can be no compromise with evil. And Noah acknowledges the reproof.

There was a wife of Noah, who was also an unbelieving woman (66:10), and she suffered the fate of Unbelievers.

...إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ...

for his conduct is unrighteous.

...فَلاَ تَسْأَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge!

...إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَن تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (٤٦)

I give thee counsel, lest thou act like the ignorant!"

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

47. Noah said:

"O my Lord! I do seek refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge.

...وَإِلاَّ تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُن مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٤٧)

And unless Thou forgive me and have Mercy on me, I should indeed be lost!"

C1541. Noah, in his natural affection and respect for ties of relationship, was overcome with human weakness in wishing to reverse the Decree of Allah.

It was not sin but ignorance. His ignorance was corrected by divine inspiration, and he immediately saw the full Truth, acknowledged his error, and asked for Allah's forgiveness and mercy. This is the standard set for us all.

قِيلَ يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلاَمٍ مِّنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى أُمَمٍ مِّمَّن مَّعَكَ...

48. The word came:

"O Noah! come down (from the Ark) with Peace from Us, and Blessings on thee and on some of the Peoples (who will spring) from those with thee:

...وَأُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُهُمْ ...

but (there will be other) Peoples to whom We shall grant their pleasures (for a time),

C1542. Cf. 2:126.

... ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٤٨)

but in the end will a grievous Penalty reach them from Us."

C1543. Those who truly seek Allah's light and guidance and sincerely bend their will to His Will are freely admitted to Allah's grace. Notwithstanding any human weaknesses in them, they are advanced higher in the stage on account of their Faith, Trust, and Striving after Right. They are given Allah's Peace, which gives the soul true calmness and strength, and all the blessings that flow from spiritual life.

This was given not only to Noah and his family but to all the righteous people who were saved with him. And their descendants were also promised those blessings on condition of righteousness. But some of them fell from grace, as we know in history. Allah's grace is not a social or family privilege. Each people and each individual must earnestly strive for it and earn it.

تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ...

49. Such are some of the stories of the Unseen, which We have revealed unto thee:

...مَا كُنتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنتَ وَلاَ قَوْمُكَ مِن قَبْلِ هَـذَا...

before this, neither thou nor thy People knew them.

...فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٩)

So persevere patiently:

for the End is for those who are righteous.

C1544. Cf. n. 1528 to 11:35.

The sum of the whole matter is that the righteous, who work for Allah and their fellow-men, may be traduced, insulted, and persecuted. But they will be sustained by Allah's Mercy. They must go on working patiently, for the End will all be for them and their Cause.

C.106 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:50-68)

Awful were the fates of the 'Ad
And the Thamud, two mighty peoples
Of ancient Arabia. They rejected
Allah and His Message and went on
In their evil ways-the 'Ad
In their superstitions and arrogance,
And the Thamud in their entrenched
Selfishness, denying to others the gifts
Of Allah's spacious earth! How swiftly
Were they wiped out, as if they
Had never been? But wrong can never stand!

Section 5

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا...

50. To the 'Ad People (We sent) Hud, one of their own brethren.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَـٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

He said:

"O my people! worship Allah! ye have no other god but Him.

C1545. Cf. the story of Hud the Messenger of the 'Ad People, in 7:65-72. There the argument was how other Peoples treated their prophets as the Makkans were treating Al-Mustafa.

Here we see another point emphasized: the insolence of the 'Ad in obstinately adhering to false gods after the true God had been preached to them, Allah's grace to them, and finally Allah's justice in bringing them to book while the righteous were saved.

The locality in which the 'Ad flourished is indicated in n. 1040 to 7:65.

...إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ مُفْتَرُونَ (٥٠)

(Your other gods) ye do nothing but invent!

...يَا قَوْمِ لا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا

51. "O my people! I ask of you no reward for this (Message).

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلاَّ عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي

My reward is from none but Him Who created me:

...أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (٥١)

will ye not then understand?

...وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُواْ رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُواْ إِلَيْهِ

52. "And O my people!

ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him (in repentance):

...يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاء عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا ...

He will send you the skies pouring abundant rain,

C1546. The beautiful metaphor about the skies coming down with rain has been obscured unnecessarily in most translations.

The country of the 'Ad was an arid country, and rain was the greatest blessing they could receive. We can imagine this being said in a time of famine, when the people performed all sorts of superstitious rites and invocations instead of turning to the true God in faith and repentance.

Further, when we remember that there were, in this tract in ancient times, dams like that at Ma'arib, for the storage of rain water, the effect is still further heightened in pointing to Allah's care and mercy in His dealing with men.

... وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً...

and add strength to your strength:

C1547. Adding strength to strength may refer to increase of population, as some Commentators think.

While other parts of Arabia were sparsely populated, the irrigated lands of the 'Ad supported a comparatively dense population and added to their natural strength in the arts of peace and war.

But the term used is perfectly general. They were a powerful people in their time. If they obeyed Allah and followed the law of righteousness, they would be still more powerful, for "righteousness exalteth a nation."

...إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ (٥٢)

so turn ye not back in sin!"

...قَالُوا يَا هُودُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ

53. They said:

"O Hud! no Clear (Sign) hast thou brought us,

...وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا عَن قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٣)

and we are not the ones to desert our gods on thy word!

Nor do we believe in thee!

C1548. The argument of the Unbelievers is practically this:

"We are not convinced by you: we don't want to be convinced: we think you are a liar,-or perhaps a fool!"

(See next verse).

...إِن نَّقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسُوءٍ

54. "We say nothing but that (perhaps) some of our gods may have seized thee with imbecility."

C1549. See n. 1548 above.

Continuing their argument, the Unbelievers make a show of making all charitable allowances for Hud, but in reality cut him to the quick by bringing in their false gods.

"To be quite polite," said they, "we will not say that you are exactly a liar! Perhaps you have been touched with imbecility! Ah yes! You rail against what you call our false gods! Some of them have paid you out, and made you a fool! Ha! ha!"

This mockery is even worse than their other false accusations. For it sets up false gods against the One True God, even in dealing with Hud.

So Hud replies, with spirit and indignation:

> "At least keep Allah's name out of your futile talk! You know as well as I do, that I worship the One True God!
>
> You pretend that your false gods can smite a true Prophet of Allah!
>
> I accept the challenge. Scheme and plot against me as you may, all of you-you and your gods! See if you have any power! I ask for no quarter from you!
>
> My trust is in Allah!"

...قَالَ إِنِّي أُشْهِدُ اللّهَ وَاشْهَدُواْ أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (٥٤)

He said: "I call Allah to witness, and do ye bear witness that I am free from the sin of ascribing, to Him,

...مِن دُونِهِ

55. "Other gods as partners!

...فَكِيدُونِي جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ لاَ تُنظِرُونِ (٥٥)

So scheme (your worst) against me, all of you, and give me no respite.

C1550. Cf. 7:195 and n. 1168.

...إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُم

56. "I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord!

...مَّا مِن دَآبَّةٍ إِلاَّ هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا

There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its forelock.

C1551. Grasp of the fore-lock; an Arabic idiom, referring to a horse's fore-lock.

The man who grasps it has complete power over the horse, and for the horse the fore-lock is as it were the crown of his beauty, the sum of his power of self-

assertion. So Allah's power over all creatures is unlimited and no one can withstand His decree. Cf. 96:15-16.

...إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٥٦)

Verily, it is my Lord that is on a Straight Path.

C1552. That is, the standard of all virtue and righteousness is in the Will of Allah, the Universal Will that controls all things in goodness and justice.

You are on a crooked Path. Allah's Path is a straight Path.

...فَإِن تَوَلَّوْاْ فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُم مَّا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ

57. "If ye turn away -- I (at least) have conveyed the Message with which I was sent to you.

...وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّي قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلاَ تَضُرُّونَهُ شَيْئًا...

My Lord will make another People to succeed you, and you will not harm Him in the least.

C1553. Hud was dealing with a people of pride and obstinate rebellion. He tells them that their conduct will only recoil on themselves. It can do no harm to Allah or in any way frustrate the beneficent Plan of Allah. He will only put some other people in their place to carry out His Plan.

That Plan is referred to in the next sentence as "care and watch" over all his Creation.

...إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَىَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ (٥٧)

For my Lord hath care and watch over all things."

...وَلَمَّا جَاء أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا

58. So when Our decree issued, We saved Hud and those who believed with him, by (special) Grace from Ourselves:

C1554. A few just men might suffer for the iniquities of the many. But Allah's Plan is perfect and eventually saves His own people by special Grace, if they have Faith and Trust in Him.

...وَنَجَّيْنَاهُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (٥٨)

We saved them from a severe Penalty.

...وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ...

59. Such were the 'Ad people:

...جَحَدُواْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْاْ رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُواْ أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ (٥٩)

they rejected the Signs of their Lord and Cherisher;

disobeyed His Messengers;

and followed the command of every powerful, obstinate transgressor.

C1555. Instead of following the beneficent Lord who cherished them, they followed every rebel against Allah's Law, if he only obtained a little power to dazzle them.

وَأُتْبِعُواْ فِي هَـذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

60. And they were pursued by a Curse in this Life -- and on the Day of Judgment.

...أَلا إِنَّ عَادًا كَفَرُواْ رَبَّهُمْ...

Ah! behold! for the 'Ad rejected their Lord and Cherisher!

...أَلاَ بُعْدًا لِّعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُودٍ (٦٠)

Ah! behold! removed (from sight) were 'Ad, the people of Hud!

Section 6

وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا...

61. To the Thamud People (We sent) Salih, one of their own brethren.

C1556. The story of Salih and the Thamud people has been told from another point of view in 7:73-79. The difference in the point of view there and here is the same as in the story of Hud: see n. 1545 to 11:50.

Note how the story now is the same, and yet new points and details are brought out to illustrate each new argument.

Note, also, how the besetting sin of the 'Ad-pride and obstinacy -is distinguished from the besetting sin of the Thamud- the oppression of the poor, as illustrated by the test case and symbol of the She-camel: see n. 1044 to 7:73.

All sin is in a sense pride and rebellion; yet sins take particular hues in different circumstances, and these colours are brought out as in a most artistically painted picture-with the greatest economy of words and the most piercing analysis of motives.

For the locality and history of the Thamud see n. 1043 t0 7:73.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَـهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

He said:

"O my people! worship Allah: ye have no other god but Him.

...هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا ...

It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein:

C1557. For **Anshaa** as process of creation see n. 923 to 6:98 and the further references given there.

As to his body, man has been produced from earth or clay, and his settlement on earth is a fact of his material existence. Therefore we must conform to all the laws of our physical being, in order that through our life on this earth we may develop that higher Life which belongs to the other part of our being, our spiritual heritage. Through the use we make of our health, of our tilth, of our pastures, of material facts of all kinds, will develop our moral and spiritual nature.

... فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تُوبُواْ إِلَيْهِ...

then ask forgiveness of Him, and turn to Him (in repentance):

...إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ (٦١)

for my Lord in (always) near, ready to answer."

قَالُواْ يَا صَالِحُ قَدْ كُنتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَـذَا...

62. They said:

"O Salih! thou hast been of us! -- a center of our hopes hitherto!

C1558. Salih's life with his people has been so righteous (like that of al-Amin in later times) that he might have been chosen leader or king if he had only conformed to their superstitions and supported their sins. But he was born for a higher mission-that of a preacher of truth and righteousness and an ardent opponent of selfish privilege and a champion of the rights of humanity on Allah's free earth by the symbol of the she-camel:

see n. 1044 to 7:73.

...أَتَنْهَانَا أَن نَّعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا...

Dost thou (now) forbid us the worship of what our fathers worshipped?

...وَإِنَّنَا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ (٦٢)

But we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt as to that to which thou invitest us."

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَآتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً...

63. He said: "O my people!

Do ye see? -- if I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord and He hath sent Mercy unto me from Himself --

...فَمَن يَنصُرُنِي مِنَ اللّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ...

who then can help me against Allah if I were to disobey Him?

C1559. "Allah has been good to me and bestowed on me His light and the inestimable privilege of carrying His mission to you.

Don't you see that if I fail to carry out his mission. I shall have to answer before Him? Who can help me in that case?

The only thing which you can add to may misfortunes would be total perdition in the Hereafter."

Cf. 11:28.

...فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ (٦٣)

What then would ye add to my (portion) but perdition?

...وَيَا قَوْمِ هَـذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةً فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللّهِ

64. "And O my people!

this she-camel of Allah is a symbol to you: leave her to feed on Allah's (free) earth,

C1560. Salih does not merely take up a negative attitude. He puts forward the she-camel as a sign see n. 1044 to 7:73.

"Give up your selfish monopoly. Make Allah's gifts on this free earth available to all. Give the poor their rights, including grazing rights on common lands. Show your penitence and your new attitude by leaving this she-camel to graze freely. She is a Symbol, and therefore sacred to you."

But their only reply was to defy the appeal and ham-string the camel. And so they went the way of all sinners-to total perdition.

...وَلاَ تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ (٦٤)

and inflict no harm on her, or a swift Penalty will seize you!

...فَعَقَرُوهَا

65. But they did hamstring her.

...فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُواْ فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلاَثَةَ أَيَّامٍ

So he said: "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days:

C1561. Just three days' time for further thought and repentance! But they paid no heed.

A terrible earthquake came by night, preceded by a mighty rumbling blast (probably volcanic), such as is well-known in earthquake areas. It came by night and

buried them in their own fortress homes, which they thought such places of security!

The morning found them lying on their faces hidden from the light. How the mighty were brought low!

...ذَٰلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوبٍ (٦٥)

(then will be your ruin): there is a promise not to be belied!"

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ...

66. When Our Decree issued, We saved Saleh and those who believed with him,

...بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَمِنْ خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ...

by (special) Grace from Ourselves -- and from the Ignominy of that Day.

C1562. Cf. 11:58 above and n. 1554.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ (٦٦)

For thy Lord -- He is the Strong One, and Able to enforce His Will.

For **'Aziz,** see n. 2818 to 22:40.

... وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةُ

67. The (mighty) Blast overtook the wrongdoers,

C1563. Cf. 7:78 and n. 1047, also n. 1561 above.

... فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٦٧)

and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning --

...كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا

68. As if they had never dwelt and flourished there.

...أَلَا إِنَّ ثَمُودَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ...

Ah! behold! for the Thamud rejected their Lord and Cherisher!

...أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُودَ (٦٨)

Ah! behold! removed (from sight) were the Thamud!

C1564. Cf. 11:60 above.

C.107 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:69-95)

When the angels, on a mission to Sodom
And Gomorrah, Cities of the Plain,
Passed by Abraham, he entertained them
And received from them the Good News
Of the line of Prophets to spring from his loins.
He tried, in his goodness of heart, to intercede
For the wicked Cities, but they were steeped
In Sin and past all hope of repentance.
Lut preached to them, but they flouted him
And went to their fate, as also did Midian.
The People of Shu'ayb destroyed their commerce
By fraudulent dealings and love of brute force.
Marvelous are Allah's Mercies, and strange
Art the ways of ungrateful man!

Section 7

وَلَقَدْ جَاءتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى...

69. There came Our Messengers to Abraham with glad tidings.

...قَالُواْ سَلاَمًا...

They said, "Peace!"

...قَالَ سَلاَمٌ... ...

He answered, "Peace!"

...فَمَا لَبِثَ أَن جَاء بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ (٦٩)...

and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf.

C1565. According to the sequence of Surah 7, the next reference should be to the story of Lut, and that story

commences at 11:77 below, but it is introduced by a brief reference to an episode in the life of his uncle Abraham, from whose seed sprang the peoples to whom Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad Al-Mustafa were sent with the major Revelations.

Abraham had by this time passed through the fire of persecutions in the Mesopotamian valleys: he had left behind him the ancestral idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees; he had been tried and he had triumphed over the persecution of Nimrud: he had now taken up his residence in Canaan, from which his nephew Lot (Lut) was called to preach to the wicked Cities of the Plain east of the Dead sea which is itself called Bahr Lut.

Thus prepared and sanctified, he was now ready to receive the Message that he was chosen to be the progenitor of a great line of Prophets, and that Message is now referred to.

Can we localize Nimrud?

If local tradition in place-names can be relied upon, this king must have ruled over the tract which includes the modern Nimrud, on the Tigris, about twenty miles south of Mosul. This is the site of Assyrian ruins of great interest, but the rise of Assyria as an Empire was of course much later than the time of Abraham. The Assyrian city was called Kalakh (or Calah), and archaeological excavations carried out there have yielded valuable results, which are however irrelevant for our Commentary.

فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لاَ تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً...

70. But when he saw their hands went not towards the (meal), he felt some mistrust of them, and conceived a fear of them.

C1565a. Abraham received the strangers with a salutation of Peace, and immediately placed before them a sumptuous meal of roasted calf,

The strangers were embarrassed. They were angels and did not eat. If hospitality is refused, it means that those who refuse it meditate no good to the would be host.

Abraham therefore had a feeling of mistrust and fear in his mind, which the strangers at once set at rest by saying that their mission was in the first place to help Lut as a warner to the Cities of Plain. But in the second place they had good news for Abraham; he was to be the father of great peoples! (R).

...قَالُواْ لاَ تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (٧٠)

They said: "Fear not: we have been sent against the people of Lut."

C1566. The people of Lut means the people to whom Lut was sent on his mission of warning, the people of the wicked Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah.

...وَامْرَأَتُهُ قَآئِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ

71. And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed:

C1567. The narrative is very concise, and most of the details are taken for granted. We may suppose that the angels gave the news first to Abraham, who was already, according to Gen. 21:5, a hundred years of age, and his wife Sarah was not far short of ninety (Gen. 17:17).

She was probably screened. She could hardly believe the news. In her skepticism (some say in her joy) she laughed. But the news was formally communicated to her that she was to be the mother of Isaac, and through Isaac, the grandmother of Jacob. Jacob was to be a fruitful tree, with his twelve sons.

But hitherto Abraham had had no son by her, and Sarah was past the age of child-bearing. "How could it be?" she thought. (R).

...فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَقَ وَمِن وَرَاء إِسْحَقَ يَعْقُوبَ (٧١)

but We gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob.

.... قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَى

72. She said: "Alas for me!

C1568. This is as much a sigh of past regrets as of future wistfulness!

... أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا۠ عَجُوزٌ وَهَـٰذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا..

Shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man?

...إِنَّ هَـٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ (٧٢)

That would indeed be a wonderful thing!"

قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ...

73. They said:

"Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree?

...رَحْمَتُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ...

The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, O ye people of the house!

C1569. Ahl al bayt: people of the house, a polite form of addressing the wife and members of the family.

Blessings are here invoked on the whole family.

...إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ (٧٣)

for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!"

C1570. This little episode of Abraham's life comes in fitly as one of the illustrations of Allah's wonderful providence in His dealings with man.

Abraham had had a tussle with his father on behalf of Truth and Unity (6:74); he had passed through the fire unscathed (21:68-69); he had travelled to far countries, and was now ready to receive his great mission as the fountain-head of prophets in his old age.

Humanly speaking it seemed impossible that he should have a son at his age, and yet it came to pass and became a corner-stone of sacred history.

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَى يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (٧٤)

74. When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings had reached him, he began to plead with Us for Lut's people.

C1571. Glad-tidings: not only that he was to have a son, but that he was to be a fountain-head of prophets.

So he now begins to plead at once for the sinful people to whom Lut was sent as a warner.

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُّنِيبٌ (٧٥)

75. For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah.

C1572. Like Al-Mustafa, Abraham had three qualities in a preeminent degree, which are here mentioned:

- he was long-suffering with other people's faults:
- his sympathies and compassion were very wide: and
- for every difficulty or trouble he turned to Allah and sought Him in prayer.

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاء أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ...

76. Abraham! seek not this.
The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth:

...وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ (٧٦)

for them there cometh a Penalty that cannot be turned back!

C1573. This is a sort of prophetic apostrophe.

'O Abraham! All your warning. O Lut, will be unheeded! Alas! they are so deep in sin that nothing will reclaim them!' This is illustrated in verse 79 below.

And now we proceed to Lut and how he was dealt with by the wicked.

وَلَمَّا جَاءتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا...

77. When Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account and felt himself powerless (to protect) them.

...وَقَالَ هَـذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ (٧٧)

He said: "This is a distressful day."

C1574. The story of Lut, as referred to in 7:80-84, laid emphasis on the rejection of Lut's mission by men who practised unnatural abominations. See n. 1049 to 7:80.

Here the emphasis is laid on Allah's dealings with men;

- in mercy for true spiritual service and in righteous wrath and punishment for those who defy the laws of nature established by Him;
- also on men's dealings with each other and the contrast between the righteous and the wicked who respect no laws human or divine.

وَجَاءهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ...

78. And his people came rushing towards him,

...وَمِن قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ...

and they had been long in the habit of practicing abominations.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ هَـؤُلاء بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ...

He said:

"O my people! here are my daughters: they are purer for you (if ye marry)!

C1575. The Biblical narrative suggests that the daughters were married and their husbands were close by (Gen. 19:14) and that these same daughters afterwards committed incest with their father and had children by him (Gen. 19:31-33).

The holy Quran nowhere suggests such abominations. Some Commentators suggest that "my daughters" in the mouth of a venerable man like Lut, the father of his people, may mean any young girls of those Towns.

"My son" (waladi) is still a common mode of address in Arabic-speaking countries when an elderly man addresses a young man.

...فَاتَّقُوا اللّهَ وَلاَ تُخْزُونِ فِي ضَيْفِي...

Now fear Allah, and cover me not with shame about my guests!

...أَلَيْسَ مِنكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيدٌ (٧٨)

Is there not among you a single right-minded man?"

قَالُواْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ...

79. They said:

"Well dost thou know we have no need of thy daughters:

...وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيدُ (٧٩)

indeed thou knowest quite well what we want!"

قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَى رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ (٨٠)

80. He said: "Would that I had power to suppress you or that I could betake myself to some powerful support."

C1576. Lut seemed helpless in the situation in which he found himself,-alone against a rabble of people inflamed with evil passions. He wished he had had the strength to suppress them himself or had had some powerful support to lean on!

But the powerful support was there, though he had not realized it till then. It was the support of Allah. His guests were not ordinary men, but Angels who had come to test the people before they inflicted the punishment. They now declared themselves, and gave him directions to get away before the morning, when the punishment would descend on the doomed Cities of the Plain.

قَالُواْ يَا لُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَن يَصِلُواْ إِلَيْكَ...

81. (The Messengers) said

"O Lut! we are Messengers from thy Lord! By no means shall they reach thee!

...فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلاَ يَلْتَفِتْ مِنكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلاَّ امْرَأَتَكَ...

Now travel with thy family while yet a part of the night remains, and let not any of you look back:

but thy wife (will remain behind):

C1577. Even in Lut's household was one who detracted from the harmony of the family. She was disobedient to

her husband, and he was here obeying Allah's Command.

She looked back and shared the fate of the wicked inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain:

see also 66:10.

The Biblical narrative suggests that she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26).

...إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ...

to her will happen what happens to the people.

...إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ...

Morning is their time appointed:

...أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ (٨١)...

is not the morning nigh?"

...فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا...

82. When Our decree issued, We turned (the cities) upside down,

...وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً ...

and rained down on them brimstones

C1578. Cf. 7:84 and n. 1052.

... مِّن سِجِّيلٍ مَّنضُودٍ (٨٢)

hard as baked clay, spread, layer on layer --

C1579. Sijjil, a Persian word Arabicised, from Sang-o-gil, or Sang-i-gil, stone and clay, or hard as baked clay, according to the Qamus.

Sodom and Gomorrah were in a tract of hard, caky, sulphurous soil, to which this description well applies.

Cf. 51:33, where the words are "stones of clay" (hijarat min tin) in connection with the same incident.

On the other hand, in 105:4, the word sijjil is used for pellets of hard-baked clay in connection with Abraha and the Companions of the Elephant.

مُّسَوَّمَةً عِندَ رَبِّكَ...

83. Marked as from thy Lord:

C1580. If we take the words literally, they would mean that the showers of brimstones were marked with the destiny of the wicked as decreed by Allah.

But would it not be better to take them figuratively, to mean that the shower of brimstones was especially appointed in Allah's Decree or Plan to mark the punishment for the crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah?

وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ (٨٣)...

nor are they ever far from those who do wrong!

C1581. They: Arabic, **hiya:** some Commentators take the pronoun to refer to the wicked cities so destroyed: the meaning then would be: those wicked cities were not so different from other cities that do wrong, for they would all suffer similar punishment!

Perhaps it would be better to refer "they" to the stones of punishment by a metonymy for "Punishment": 'punishment would not be far from any people that did wrong.'

Section 8

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا...

84. To the Madyan people (We sent) Shu'ayb, one of their own brethren:

C1582. Cf. 7:85-93.

The location of Madyan is explained in n. 1053 to 7:85 and the chronological place of Shu'ayb in n. 1064 to 7:93.

The point of the reference here is different from that in Surah 7. Here the emphasis is on Allah's dealings with men and men's crooked and obstinate ways:

There the emphasis was rather on their treatment of their Prophet, thus throwing light on some of the sins of the Makkans in later times.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَـهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

he said:

"O my people! worship Allah:

ye have no other god but Him.

...وَلاَ تَنقُصُواْ الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ...

And give not short measure or weight:

...إِنِّيَ أَرَاكُم بِخَيْرٍ وَإِنِّيَ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيطٍ (٨٤)

I see you in prosperity, but I fear for you the Penalty of a Day that will compass (you) all round.

C1583. The Midianites were a commercial people, and their besetting sin was commercial selfishness and fraudulent dealings in weights and measures.

Their Prophet tells them that that is the surest way to cut short their "prosperity", both in the material and the spiritual sense. When the Day of Judgment comes, it will search out their dealings through and through: "it will compass them all round," and they will not be able to escape then, however Much they may conceal their frauds in this world.

وَيَا قَوْمِ أَوْفُواْ الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ...

85. "And O my people! give just measure and weight,

...وَلاَ تَبْخَسُواْ النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءهُمْ ...

nor withhold from the people the things that are their due:

C1584. Both Plato and Aristotle define justice as the virtue which gives every one his due.

From this point of view Justice becomes the master virtue, and includes most other virtues. It was the lack of this that ruined the Midianites. Their selfishness was "intent on mischief," i.e., spoiling other people's business by not giving them their just dues.

... وَلاَ تَعْثَوْاْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٨٥)

commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief.

بَقِيَّةُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ...

86. "That which is left you by Allah is best for you, if ye (but) believed!

C1585. Allah's Law does not require that a man should deprive himself of the things that are necessary for his own well-being and development.

If he follows Allah's Law, what is left him after he renders to others their just dues will be not only enough, but will be the best possible provision for his own physical and spiritual growth. Even the kindness and consideration which Allah's Law inculcates are in the best interests of the man's own soul. But of course the kindness and consideration must be spontaneous. It must flow from the man's own will, and cannot be forced on him by the Prophet who come from Allah to show him the way.

وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُم بِحَفِيظٍ (٨٦)...

But I am not set over you to keep watch!"

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصَلَاتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَن نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا...

87. They said:

"Oh Shu'ayb! does thy (religion of) prayer command thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practiced,

أَوْ أَن نَّفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَؤُا...

or that we leave off doing what we like with our property?

C1586. It is the way of selfish and material minded people;

- to scoff at spiritual things like prayer and worship and
- to hug their own property rights as if there were not other rights even greater than those of property!

إِنَّكَ لَأَنتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ (٨٧)...

Truly, though art the one that forbeareth with faults and is right-minded!"

C1587. They grow sarcastic against Shu'ayb. In effect they say:

"You are a fine man! You teach us that we must be kind and forbearing with other people's faults, and now get at what you call our sins! You think you are the only right minded man!"

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا...

88. He said:

"O my people! see ye whether I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord, and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from Himself?

C1588. Shu'ayb's answer is gentle and persuasive,

- First, he would ask them not to fly into a passion but satisfy themselves that he had a mission from Allah, and was working in the discharge of his mission: he was not merely finding fault with them.
- Secondly, though he was a poor man, he asked them to note that he was happy and comfortable: Allah had given him good sustenance, material and spiritual, as from Himself, though he did not resort to the sort of tricks which they considered necessary for their prosperity.
- Thirdly, if he forbade them anything he wished to apply the same standards to himself.
- Fourthly, all the advice which he is giving them is for their own good, which he desires to advance to the utmost of his powers.
- Fifthly, he is humble for himself; he would not set himself up to be their teacher or guide, or expect to be obeyed; the success of any of his efforts on their behalf must come from Allah's grace; will they not therefore turn to Allah, so that Allah's grace can heal them?

...وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ...

I wish not, in opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do.

...إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلاَّ الإِصْلاَحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلاَّ بِاللّهِ...

I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power;

and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah:

...عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ (٨٨)

in Him I trust, and unto Him I look.

...وَيَا قَوْمِ لاَ يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَن يُصِيبَكُم مِّثْلُ مَا أَصَابَ

89. "And O my people!

let not my dissent (from you) cause you to sin, lest ye suffer a fate similar to that of

C1589. Finally, Shu'ayb appeals to them as man to man.

> "Because I differ from you, do not think I do not love you or feel for you. Let it not drive you into obstinacy and sin. I see things that you do not. My vision takes in the fate of previous generations who sinned, and perished on account of their sins. Turn therefore to Allah in repentance."

...قَوْمَ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ... ...

the people of Noah or of Hud or of Salih,

...وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِّنكُم بِبَعِيدٍ (٨٩)

nor are the people of Lut far off from you!

C1590. The generation of Lut was not far off from the generation of Shu'ayb chronologically if Shu'ayb was only in the fourth generation from Abraham (see n. 1064 to 7:93). Nor was its habitat geographically far from that of Shu'ayb, as the Midianites wandered about from Sinai Peninsula to the Jordan valley (see n. 1053 to 7:85).

...وَاسْتَغْفِرُواْ رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُواْ إِلَيْهِ

90. "But ask forgiveness of you Lord, and turn unto Him (in repentance):

...إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ (٩٠)

for my Lord is indeed Full of mercy and loving-kindness."

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ مَا نَفْقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا تَقُولُ ...

91. They said:

"O Shuayb! much of what thou sayest we do not understand!

C1591. Spiritual things are easy to understand if we bring the right mind to them. But those who are contemptuous of them deliberately shut their eyes to Allah's Signs, and then pretend in their superior arrogance that they are 'quite beyond them'!

... وَإِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِينَا ضَعِيفًا...

In fact among us we see that thou hast no strength!

...وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنَاكَ...

Were it not for thy family, we should certainly have stoned thee!

...وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ (٩١)

For thou hast among us no great position!"

C1592. What they do understand is brute strength. They practically say:

"Don't you see that we have all the power and influence, and you, Shu'ayb, are only a poor Teacher?

We could stone you or imprison you or do what we like with you!

Thank us for our kindness that we spare you-, for the sake of your family. It is more than you yourself deserve!"

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَهْطِي أَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ...

92. He said: "O my people!

is then my family of more consideration with you than Allah?

...وَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُ وَرَاءَكُمْ ظِهْرِيًّا...

For ye cast Him away behind your backs (with contempt).

...إِنَّ رَبِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (٩٢)

But verily my Lord encompasseth on all sides all that ye do!

C1593. Cf. 8:47.

وَيَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُواْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ...

93. "And O my people!

do whatever ye can: I will do (my part):

C1594. Cf. 6:135 and n. 957.

...سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَن يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ ...

soon will ye know who it is on whom descends the Penalty of ignominy, and who is a liar!

...وَارْتَقِبُواْ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ (٩٣)

And watch ye!

for I too am watching with you!"

C1595. If the wicked will continue to blaspheme and mock, what can the godly say but this?

"Watch and wait! Allah's Plan works without fail! I have faith, and I too will watch with you for its fulfilment."

Cf. 10:102, and n. 1484.

وَلَمَّا جَاء أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا...

94. When Our decree issued, We saved Shu'ayb and those who believed with him, by (special) Mercy from Ourselves:

C1596. Cf. 11:66 and 11:58, n. 1554.

...وَأَخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ الصَّيْحَةُ فَأَصْبَحُواْ فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٩٤)

but the (mighty) Blast did seize the wrongdoers, and they lay prostrate in their homes by the morning --

...كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْاْ فِيهَا

95. As if they had never dwelt and flourished there!

C1597. Cf. 11:67-68.

The blast was probably the tremendous noise which accompanies volcanic eruptions.

...أَلاَ بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعِدَتْ ثَمُودُ (٩٥)

Ah! behold! how the Madyan were removed (from sight) as were removed the Thamud!

C.108 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:96-123)

How the arrogant Pharaoh misled his people
In resisting Allah's Message through Moses!
Thus did they ruin themselves! It was they
Who wronged themselves: for Allah is ever kind
And His punishments are just. All men
Will be brought to His Judgement Seat, and the good
Will be rewarded with bliss, as the evil
Will be consigned to misery. Eschew evil;
Stand firm in righteousness; be not immersed
In the lusts of this world. Learn from the stories
Of the past, and seek the Lord's Mercy;
Trust Him and serve and praise Him forever!

Section 9

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٩٦)

96. And We sent Moses, with Our Clear (Signs) and an authority manifest,

C1598. The story of Moses and Pharaoh is referred to in many places in the Quran, each in connection with some special point to be illustrated.

Here the point is that Allah's dealings with man are in all things and at all times just. But man falls under false leadership by deliberate choice and perishes along with his false leaders accordingly.

In exercise of the intelligence and choice given him, man should be particularly careful to understand his own responsibilities and to profit from Allah's Signs, so as to attain to Allah's Mercy and blessings.

إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ...

97. Unto Pharaoh and his Chiefs:

...فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ...

but they followed the command of Pharaoh,

C1599. Pharaoh is the type of the arrogant, selfish, and false leader, who poses as a power in rivalry with that of Allah.

Such an attitude seems to attract unregenerate humanity, which falls a willing victim, in spite of the teaching and warning given by the men of Allah and the many moral and spiritual forces that beckon man towards Allah's Grace.

...وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ (٩٧)

and the command of Pharaoh was no right (guide).

...يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ...

98. He will go before his people on the Day of Judgment, and lead them into the Fire (as cattle are led to water):

C1600. Awrada: to lead, as cattle, down to their watering place.

The metaphor is apt. The true herdsman is trusted by his normal flock, and he leads them in the heat of the day down to pleasant and cool watering places in order that they may slake their thirst and be happy.

The false leader does the opposite: he takes them down to the fire of eternal misery! And yet men sin against their own intelligence, and follow the false leader like cattle without intelligence!

...وَبِئْسَ الْوِرْدُ الْمَوْرُودُ (٩٨)

but woeful indeed will be this leading (and) the place led to!

...وَأُتْبِعُوا فِي هَـٰذِهِ لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

99. And they are followed by a curse in this (life) and on the Day of Judgment:

...بِئْسَ الرِّفْدُ الْمَرْفُودُ (٩٩)

and woeful is the gift which shall be given (unto them)!

ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْقُرَىٰ نَقُصُّهُ عَلَيْكَ...

100. These are some of the stories of communities which We relate unto thee:

...مِنْهَا قَآئِمٌ ...

of them some are standing,

C1601. Some are standing: like corn, which is ready to be reaped.

Among the communities which remained was, and is, Egypt, although the Pharaoh and his wicked people have been swept away.

The simile of standing corn also suggests that at no time can town or community expect permanency, except in the Law of the Lord.

... وَحَصِيدٌ (١٠٠)

and some have been mown down (by the sickle of time).

C1602. Notions grow and ripen and are mown down. If they disobeyed Allah, their end is evil; if they were true and godly, their harvest was good.

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَـٰكِن ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ...

101.It was not We that wronged them: they wronged their own souls:

...فَمَا أَغْنَتْ عَنْهُمْ آلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِي يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ لَّمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ...

the deities, other than Allah, whom they invoked, profited them no whit when there issued the decree of thy Lord:

C1603. All false and fleeting shadows must vanish before the reality and permanence of the decree of Allah. If we worshipped the false, we earned nothing but perdition.

...وَمَا زَادُوهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْبِيبٍ (١٠١)

nor did they add aught (to their lot) but perdition!

وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرَى وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ...

102.Such is the chastisement of thy Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous,

...إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ (١٠٢)

indeed, and severe is His chastisement.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الآخِرَةِ...

103. In that is a Sign for those who fear the Penalty of the Hereafter:

...ذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوعٌ لَّهُ النَّاسُ وَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُودٌ (١٠٣)

that is a Day for which mankind will be gathered together:

that will be a Day of Testimony.

C1604. Yaumun mashhud: To suggest the comprehensive meaning of the Arabic I have translated, "a Day of Testimony".

I proceed to explain the various shades of meaning implied:

- a Day to which all testimony points from every quarter;
- a Day when testimony will be given before Allah's Judgment Seat, by all who are relevant witnesses, e.g., the Prophets that preached, the men or women we benefited or injured, the angels who recorded our thoughts and deeds, or our thoughts and deeds personified;
- a Day which will be witnessed, i.e., seen by all, no matter how or where they died.

وَمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُ إِلاَّ لِأَجَلٍ مَّعْدُودٍ (١٠٤)

104. Nor shall We delay it but for a term appointed.

يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لاَ تَكَلَّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِهِ...

105. The day it arrives, no soul shall speak except His leave:

C1605. Speak i.e.,

- either in self-defence or

- in accusation of others or
- to intercede for others, or
- to enter into conversation or
- ask questions, one with another.

It will be a solemn Day, before the Great Judge of all, to whom everything will be known and whose authority will be unquestioned.

There will be no room for quibbling or equivocation or subterfuge of any kind, nor can any one lay the blame on another or take the responsibility of another. Personal responsibility will be enforced strictly.

فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ (١٠٥)...

of those (gathered) some will be wretched and some will be blessed.

C1606. Shaqi (wretched) and **Said** (blessed) have become almost technical theological terms. They are explained in the four following verses.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُواْ فَفِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ (١٠٦)

106. Those who are wretched shall be in the Fire:

there will be for them therein (nothing but) the heaving of sighs and sobs:

C1607. The first word, **Zafir**, translated "sighs", is applied to one part in the process of the braying of an, ass, when he emits a deep breath.

The second, **Shahiq**, translated, "sobs", is the other process in the braying of an ass, when he draws in a long breath.

This suggestion of an animal proverbial for his folly implies that the wicked, in spite of their arrogance and insolence in this world below, will at last realise that they have been fools after all, throwing away their own chances whenever they got them,

In 67:7 the word Shahiq is applied to the tremendous roaring in-take or devouring of Hell-fire.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالأَرْضُ إِلاَّ مَا شَاء رَبُّكَ...

107.They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord willeth:

C1608. Khalidin: This is the word which is usually translated "dwell for ever" or "dwell for aye".

Here it is definitely connected with two conditions, viz:

- as long as the heavens and the earth endure, and
- except as Allah wills.

Some Muslim theologians deduce from this the conclusion that the penalties referred to are not eternal, because the heavens and the earth as we see them are not eternal, and the punishments for the deeds of a life that will end should not be such as will never end.

The majority of Muslim theologians reject this view. They hold that the heavens and the earth here referred to are not those we see now, but others that will be eternal. They agree that Allah's Will is unlimited in scope and power, but that it has willed that the rewards and punishments of the Day of Judgment will be eternal.

This is not the place to enter into this tremendous controversy.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ (١٠٧)

for thy Lord is the (sure) Accomplisher of what He planneth.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سُعِدُواْ فَفِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالأَرْضُ...

108.And those who are blessed shall be in the Garden:

they will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure,

C1609. Exactly the same arguments apply as in the last note.

...إِلاَّ مَا شَاء رَبُّكَ...

except as thy Lord willeth:

...عَطَاء غَيْرَ مَجْذُوذٍ (١٠٨)

a gift without break.

C1610. The felicity will be uninterrupted, unlike any joy or happiness which we can imagine in this life and which is subject to chances and changes, as our daily experience shows.

فَلاَ تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْبُدُ هَـؤُلاء...

109. Be not then in doubt as to what these men worship.

...مَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلاَّ كَمَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُهُم مِّن قَبْلُ...

They worship nothing but what their fathers worshipped before (them):

C1611. Their worship is not based on any spiritual attitude of mind. They merely follow the ways of their fathers.

...وَإِنَّا لَمُوَفُّوهُمْ نَصِيبَهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنقُوصٍ (١٠٩)

but verily We shall pay them back (in full) their portion without (the least) abatement.

C1612. Allah will take fully into account all their motives in such mummery as they call worship, and they will have their full spiritual consequences in the future.

Section 10

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيهِ...

110. We certainly gave the Book to Moses, but differences arose therein:

...وَلَوْلاَ كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ...

had it not been that a Word had gone forth before from thy Lord, the matter would have been decided between them:

C1613. Cf. 10:19.

Previous revelations are not to be denied or dishonoured because those who nominally go by them have corrupted

and deprived them of spiritual value by their vain controversies and disputes.

It was possible to settle such disputes under the flag, as it were, of the old Revelations, but Allah's Plan was to revive and rejuvenate His Message through Islam, amongst a newer and younger people, unhampered by the burden of age long prejudices.

...وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ (١١٠)

but they are in suspicious doubt concerning it.

C1614. Cf. 11:62.

There, is always in human affairs the conflict between the old and the new,-the worn out system of our ancestors, and the fresh living spring of Allah's inspiration fitting in with new times and new surroundings.

The advocates of the former look upon this latter not only with intellectual doubt but with moral suspicion, as did the People of the Book upon Islam, with its fresh outlook and vigorous realistic way of looking at things.

...وَإِنَّ كُلاًّ لَّمَّا لَيُوَفِّيَنَّهُمْ رَبُّكَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ

111. And, of a surety, to all will your Lord pay back (in full the recompense) of their deeds:

...إِنَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١١١)

for He knoweth well all that they do.

C1615. Cf. 11:109 above, with which the argument is now connected up by recalling the characteristic word ("pay back") and leading to the exhortation (in the verses following) to stand firm in the right path freshly revealed.

...فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَن تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلاَ تَطْغَوْاْ

112. Therefore stand firm (in the straight path) as thou art commanded -- thou and those who with thee turn (unto Allah); and transgress not (from the Path):

...إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١٢)

for He seeth well all that ye do.

وَلاَ تَرْكَنُواْ إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ...

113. And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you;

...وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاء ثُمَّ لاَ تُنصَرُونَ (١١٣)

and ye have no protectors other than Allah, nor shall ye be helped.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلاَةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ ...

114.And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day

C1616. The two ends of the day: Morning and afternoon.

- The morning prayer is the Fajr, after the light is up but before sunrise: we thus get up betimes and begin the day with the remembrance of Allah and of our duty to Him.
- The early afternoon prayer, Zuhr, is immediately after noon: we are in the midst of our daily life, and again we remember Allah. (R).

... وَزُلَفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ...

and at the approaches of the night:

C1617. Approaches of the night: Zulafun, plural of Zulfatun, an approach, something near at hand.

As Arabic has, like Greek, a dual number distinct from the plural, and the plural number is used here, and not the dual, it is reasonable to argue that at least three "approaches of the night" are meant.

- The late afternoon prayer, 'Asr, can be one of these three, and
- the evening prayer, Magrib, just after sunset, can be the second.
- The early night prayer, 'Isha, at supper time-when the glow of sunset is disappearing, would be the third

of the "approaches of the night", when we commit ourselves to Allah before sleep.

These are the five canonical prayers of Islam.

...إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ...

for those things that are good remove those that are evil:

C1618. "Those things that are good": in this context the words refer primarily to prayers, but they include all good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

It is by them that we keep away everything that is evil, whether referring to the past, the present, or the future.

...ذَلِكَ ذِكْرَى لِلذَّاكِرِينَ (١١٤)

be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord):

...وَاصْبِرْ...

115. And be steadfast in patience;

...فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١١٥)

for verily Allah will not suffer the reward of the righteous to perish.

فَلَوْلاَ كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ أُوْلُواْ بَقِيَّةٍ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الأَرْضِ...

116. Why were there not, among the generations before you, persons possessed of balanced good sense, prohibiting (men) from mischief in the earth --

C1619. Baqiyat: some virtue or faculty that stands assault and is lasting;

balanced good sense that stands firm to virtue and is not dazzled by the lusts and pleasures of this world, and is not deterred by fear from boldly condemning wrong if it was fashionable or customary.

It is leaders possessed of such character that can save a nation from disaster or perdition. The scarcity of such leaders-and the rejection of the few who stood out-

brought ruin among the nations whose example has already been set out to us as a warning.

In 11:86 the word has a more literal meaning.

...إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّمَّنْ أَنجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ...

except a few among them whom We saved (from harm)?

C1620. The exceptional men of firm virtue would have been destroyed by the wicked to whom they were an offence, had they not been saved by the grace and mercy of Allah.

Or perhaps, but for such grace, they might themselves have succumbed to the evil around them, or been overwhelmed in the general calamity.

...وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ مَا أُتْرِفُواْ فِيهِ وَكَانُواْ مُجْرِمِينَ (١١٦)

But the wrongdoers pursued the enjoyment of the good things of life which were given them, and persisted in sin.

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُونَ (١١٧)

117. Nor would thy Lord be the One to destroy communities for a single wrongdoing if its members were likely to mend.

C1621. There are different shades of interpretation for this verse.

I follow Baydawi in construing zulmin here as "a single wrong".

He thinks that the wrong referred to is *shirk*, or polytheism; Allah will not destroy mere wrong belief if the conduct is right.

I am inclined to interpret it in more general terms.

Allah is Loving-Suffering and Oft-Forgiving: He is too Merciful to destroy for a single wrong, if there is any hope of reclaiming the wrongdoers to repentance and amendment or right life.

An alternative interpretation is: "to destroy communities unjustly."

وَلَوْ شَاء رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً...

118. If thy Lord had so willed He could have made mankind one People:

C1622. Cf. 10:19.

All mankind might have been one. But in Allah's Plan man was to have a certain measure of free-will, and this made difference inevitable.

This would not have mattered if all had honestly sought Allah. But selfishness and moral wrong came in, and people's disputations became mixed up with hatred, jealousy, and sin, except in the case of those who accepted Allah's grace, which saved them.

The object of their creation was to raise them up spiritually by Allah's grace. But if they will choose the path of evil and fall into sin, Allah's decree must be fulfilled, and His justice will take its course. In the course of that justice Hell will be filled with men and jinns, such is the number of those who go astray.

...وَلاَ يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ (١١٨)

but they will not cease to dispute,

...إِلاَّ مَن رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ

119. Except those on whom He hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them:

...وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لأَمْلأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ (١١٩)

and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled:

"I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together."

C1623. Cf. 7:18 and 7:179.

If Satan and his evil soldiers tempt men from the path of rectitude, the responsibility of the tempted, who choose the path of evil, is no less than that of the tempters, and they will both be involved in punishment together.

وَكُـلاًّ نَّقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاء الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ...

120. All that We relate to thee of the stories of the apostles -- with it We make firm thy heart:

...وَجَاءكَ فِي هَـذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٢٠)

in them there cometh to thee the Truth, as well as an exhortation and a message of remembrance to those who believe.

C1624. The stories of the Prophets in the Quran are not mere narratives or histories: they involve three things:

- they teach the highest spiritual Truth;
- they give advice, direction, and warning, as to how we should govern our lives, and
- they awaken our conscience and recall to us the working of Allah's Law in human affairs.

The story of Joseph in the next Sura is an illustration in point.

وَقُل لِّلَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ اعْمَلُواْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنَّا عَامِلُونَ (١٢١)

121. Say to those who do not believe:

"Do whatever ye can: we shall do our part;

C1624a. Cf. 11:93 and 6:135, n. 957.

The worst that ye can will not defeat Allah's Plan; and as for us who believe, our obvious duty is to do our part as taught to us by Allah's revelation.

وَانتَظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنتَظِرُونَ (١٢٢)

122. "And wait ye! we too shall wait."

C1625. Cf. 11:93, n. 1595, and 10:102, n. 1484.

If the wicked only wait, they will see how Allah's Plan unfolds itself. As for those who believe, they are glad to wait in perfect confidence, because they know that Allah is good and merciful, as well as just and true.

وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ...

123. To Allah do belong the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth, and to Him goeth back every affair (for decision):

C1626. Cf. 2:210.

There is nothing, secret or open, in our world or in Creation, which does not depend ultimately on Allah's Will and Plan. Every affair goes back to Him for decision. Therefore we must worship Him and trust Him.

Worship implies many things: e.g.,

- trying to understand His nature and His Will:
- realising His goodness and glory, and His working in us; as a means to this end,
- keeping Him in constant remembrance and celebrating His praise, to whom all praise is due; and
- completely identifying our will with His, which means obedience to His Law, and service, to Him and His creatures in all sincerity.

...فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ...

then worship Him, and put thy trust in Him:

...وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٢٣)

and thy Lord is not unmindful of aught that ye do.

نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَن نَّشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

We bestow of Our mercy on whom We please, and We suffer not, to be lost, the reward of those who do good.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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يُوسُفُ

Introduction and Summary

For the chronological place of this Surah and the general argument of Surahs 10-15, see Introduction to Surah 10.

In subject matter this Surah is entirely taken up with the story (recapitulated rather than told) of Joseph, the youngest (but one) of the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob. The story is called the most beautiful of stories (12:3) for many reasons;

1. it is the most detailed of any in the Quran;
2. it is full of human vicissitudes, and has therefore deservedly appealed to men and women of all classes;

3. it paints in vivid colours, with their spiritual implications, the most varied aspects of life-the patriarch's old age and the confidence between him and his little best-beloved son, the elder brothers' jealousy of this little son, their plot and their father's grief, the sale of the father's darling into slavery for a miserable little price, carnal love contrasted with purity and chastity, false charges, prison, the interpretation of dreams, low life and high life, Innocence raised to honour, the sweet "revenge" of Forgiveness and Benevolence, high matters of state and administration, humility in exaltation, filial love, and the beauty of Piety and Truth.

The story is similar to but not identical with the Biblical story; but the atmosphere is wholly different.

The Biblical story is like a folklore in which morality has no place. Its tendency is to exalt the clever and financially-minded Jew against the Egyptian, and to explain certain ethic and tribal peculiarities in later Jewish history. Joseph is shown as buying up all the cattle and the land of the poor Egyptians for the State under the stress of famine conditions, and making the Israelites "rulers" over Pharaoh's cattle.

The Quranic story, on the other hand, is less a narrative than a highly spiritual sermon or allegory explaining the seeming contradictions in life, the enduring nature of virtue in a world full of flux and change, and the marvelous working of Allah's eternal purpose in His Plan as unfolded to us on the wide canvas of history. This aspect of the matter has been a favourite with Muslims poets and Sufi exegetics. (R).

Summary- Life is a dream and a vision, to be explained by stories and parables, as in the perspicuous Arabic Quran. The truth, which Joseph the Prophet of Allah saw in his vision, was unpalatable to his ten half-brothers, who plotted against him and sold him into slavery to a merchant for a few pieces of silver (12:1-20, and C. 109).

Joseph was taken by the merchant into Egypt, was bought by a great Egyptian court dignitary (Aziz), who adopted him. The dignitary's wife sought, but in vain, to attract Joseph to the delights of earthly love. His resistance brought him disgrace and

imprisonment, but he taught the truth even in prison and was known for his kindness. One of his fellow prisoners to whom he had interpreted even in prison and was known for his kindness. One of his fellow prisoners, to whom he had interpreted a dream, was released and received into favour as the King's cupbearer (12:21-42, and C. 110).

The King had a vision, which Joseph (through the cupbearer) got an opportunity to explain. Joseph insisted that all the scandal that had been raised about him should be publicly cleared. He was received into favour, and was appointed Wazir by the King. His half-brothers (driven by famine) came to Egypt and were treated kindly by Joseph without their knowing his identity. He asks them to bring his full brother, the youngest son, Benjamin (12:43-68, and C. 111).

Joseph detains Benjamin and by a stratagem convicts his half-brothers of their hatred and crime against himself, forgives them, and sends them to bring Jacob and the whole family from Cannon to Egypt. (12:69-93, and C. 112).

Israel (Jacob) comes, is comforted, and settles in Egypt. The name of Allah is glorified. The truth of Allah endures forever, and Allah's purpose is fully revealed in the Hereafter (12:94-111, and C. 113).

C.109 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(12:1-20)

Life and Wisdom are explained by Signs,
Symbols, Parables, and moving Stories,
In the Holy Quran. A beautiful story
Is that of Joseph, the best-beloved son
Of Jacob. His future greatness
Was prefigured in a vision, but his brothers
Were filled with envy and hate; they plotted
To get rid of him and threw him down
Into a well. Some merchants found him,

Bound the Egypt. The brothers sold him
Into slavery for a few silver coins-
Him, the noblest man of his age,
Marked out by Allah for a destiny
Of greatness, righteousness, and benevolence.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الر...

1. Alif Lam Ra.

C1627. For these mystic letters, see Introduction to Surah 10.

...تِلْكَ آيَاتُ ...

These are the Symbols (or Verses)

C1628. Ayat: Signs and verses of the Quran.

The whole of Joseph's story is a Sign or a Miracle -a wonder- Working exposition of the Plan and Purpose of Allah.

... الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (١)

of the Perspicuous Book.

C1629. Cf. 5:15, n. 716.

The predominant meaning of **Mubin** here is: one that explains or makes things clear.

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٢)

2. We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'án, in order that ye may learn wisdom.

C1630. Quran means:

something

- to be read, or

- recited, or
- proclaimed.

It may apply to a verse, or a Surah, or to the whole Book of Revelation.

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَـٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ...

3. We do relate unto thee the most beautiful of stories, in that We reveal to thee this (portion of the) Qur'án:

C1631. Most beautiful of stories: see Introduction to this Surah.

Eloquence consists in conveying by a word or hint many meanings for those who can understand and wish to learn wisdom.

Not only is Joseph's story "beautiful" in that sense, Joseph himself was renowned for manly beauty; the women of Egypt, called him a noble angel (12:31), and the beauty of his exterior form was a symbol of the beauty of his soul.

وَإِن كُنتَ مِن قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ (٣)...

before this, thou too wast among those who knew it not.

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي...

4. Behold, Joseph said to his father: "O my father!

C1632. For the Parable all that is necessary to know about Joseph is that he was one of the Chosen Ones of Allah. For the story it is necessary to set down a few more details.

His father was Jacob, also called Israel the son of Isaac, the younger son of Abraham, (the elder son having been Isma'il, whose story is told in 2:124-129. Abraham may be called the Father of the line of Semitic prophecy.

Jacob had four wives. From three of them he had ten sons. In his old age he had from Rachel (Arabic Rahil) a very beautiful woman, two sons Joseph and Benjamin (the youngest).

The place where Jacob and his family and his flocks were located was in Canaan, and is shown by tradition near modern Nablus (ancient Shechem), some thirty miles north of Jerusalem. The traditional site of the well into which Joseph was thrown by his brothers is still shown in the neighbourhood.

...رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ (٤)

I did see eleven stars and the sun and the moon:

I saw them prostrate themselves to me!"

C1633. Joseph was a mere lad. But he was true and frank and righteous; he was a type of manly beauty and rectitude. His father loved him dearly. His half-brothers were jealous of him and hated him.

His destiny was prefigured in the vision. He was to be exalted in rank above his eleven brothers (stars) and his father and mother (sun and moon), but as the subsequent story shows, he never lost his head, but always honoured his parents and repaid his brothers' craft and hatred with forgiveness and kindness.

...قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ لاَ تَقْصُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا

5. Said (the father):

"My (dear) little son! relate not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they concoct a plot against thee:

C1634. The young lad Yusuf was innocent and did not even know of his brothers' guile and hatred, but the father knew and warned him.

...إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلإِنسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٥)

for Satan is to man an avowed enemy!

C1635. The story is brought up at once to its spiritual bearing.

These wicked brothers were puppets in the hands of Evil. They allowed their manhood to be subjugated by Evil, not remembering that Evil was the declared opposite or enemy of the true nature and instincts of manhood.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ...

6. "Thus will thy Lord choose thee and teach thee the interpretation of stories (and events)

C1636. If Joseph was to be of the elect, he must understand and interpret Signs and events aright. The imagination of the pure sees truths, which those not so endowed cannot understand. The dreams of the righteous prefigure great events, while the dreams of the futile are mere idle futilities. Even things that happen to us are often like dreams.

The righteous man receives disasters and reverses, not with blasphemies against Allah, but with humble devotion, seeking to ascertain His Will. Not does he receive good fortune with arrogance, but as an opportunity for doing good to friends and foes alike. His attitude to histories and stories is the same; he seeks the edifying material which leads to Allah.

وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَبَوَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ

إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَٰقَ...

and perfect His favor to thee and to the posterity of Jacob -- even as He perfected it to thy fathers Abraham and Isaac aforetime!

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦)

For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom."

C1637. Whatever happens is the result of Allah's Will and Plan. And He is good and wise, and He knows all things. Therefore we must trust Him.

In Joseph's case he could look back to his fathers, and to Abraham, the True, the Righteous, who through all adversities kept his Faith pure and undefiled, and won through.

Section 2

لَّقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٌ لِّلسَّائِلِينَ (٧)

7. Verily in Joseph and his brethren are Signs (or Symbols) for Seekers (after Truth).

C1638. In Joseph's story we have good and evil contrasted in so many different ways. Those in search of true spiritual knowledge can see it embodied in concrete events in this story of many facets, matching the colours of Joseph's many-coloured coat.

إِذْ قَالُوا لَيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَى أَبِينَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ...

8. They said:

"Truly Joseph and his brother are loved more by our father than we:

but we are a goodly body!

C1639. The ten brothers envied and hated their innocent younger brothers Joseph and Benjamin.

Jacob had the wisdom to see that his young and innocent sons wanted protection and to perceive Joseph's spiritual greatness.

But his wisdom, to them, was folly or madness of imbecility, because it touched their self-love, as truth often does. And they relied on the brute strength of numbers-the ten hefty brethren against old Jacob, the lad Joseph, and the boy Benjamin!

...إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٨)

Really our father is obviously wandering (in his mind)!

اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوِ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ...

9. "Slay ye Joseph or cast him out to some (unknown) land, that so the favor of your father may be given to you alone:

...وَتَكُونُوا مِن بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ (٩)

(There will be time enough) for you to be righteous after that!"

C1640. There seems to be some irony here, consistent with the cynical nature of these callous, worldly-wise brethren. The goodness of Joseph was a reproach to their own wickedness. Perhaps the grieved father contrasted Joseph against them, and sometimes spoke of it: "Why don't you be good like Joseph?"

This was gall and wormwood to them. Real goodness was to them nothing but a name. Perhaps it only suggested hypocrisy to them. So they plotted to get rid of Joseph. In their mean hearts they thought that would bring back their father's love whole to them. But they valued that love only for what material good they could get out of it.

On the other hand their father was neither foolish nor unjustly partial. He only knew the difference between gold and dross. They say in irony,

"Let us first get rid of Joseph. It will be time enough then to pretend to be 'good' like him, or to repent of our crime after we have had all its benefits in material things"!

قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لاَ تَقْتُلُواْ يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِي غَيَابَةِ الْجُبِّ...

10. Said one of them:

"Slay not Joseph, but if ye must do something, throw him down to the bottom of the well:

...يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (١٠)

he will be picked up by some caravan of travellers."

C1641. One of the brethren, perhaps less cruel by nature, or perhaps more worldly- wise, said:

"Why undertake the risk of blood-guiltiness? Throw him into the well you see there! Some travellers passing by will pick him up and remove him to a far country. If not, at least we shall not have killed him,"

This was false casuistry, but such casuistry appeals to sinners of a certain kind of temperament.

The well was apparently a dry well, deep enough to prevent his coming out, but with no water in which he could be drowned. It was Allah's Plan to save him alive, but not to make Joseph indebted to any of his brethren for his life!

قَالُواْ يَا أَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لاَ تَأْمَنَّا عَلَى يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَاصِحُونَ (١١)

11. They said:

"O our father! why dost thou not trust us with Joseph -- seeing we are indeed his sincere well-wishers?

C1642. The plot having been formed, the brethren proceed to put it into execution.

Jacob, knowing the situation, did not ordinarily trust his beloved Joseph with the brethren. The latter therefore remonstrate and feign brotherly affection.

أَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (١٢)

12. "Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself and play, and we shall take every care of him."

C1643. They did not expect their protestations to be believed in. But they added an argument that might appeal both to Jacob and Joseph.

'They were going to give their young brother a good time. Why not let him come out with them and play and enjoy himself to his heart's content?'

قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَن تَذْهَبُواْ بِهِ...

13. (Jacob) said:

"Really it saddens me that ye should take him away:

...وَأَخَافُ أَن يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَأَنتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ (١٣)

I fear lest the wolf should devour him while ye attend not to him."

C1644. Jacob did not know the precise plot, but he had strong misgivings.

But how could he put off these brethren? If they were driven to open hostility, they would be certain to cause him harm. He must deal with the brethren wisely and

cautiously. He pleaded that he. was an old man, and would miss Joseph and be sad without him. And after all, Joseph was not of an age to play with them. They would be attending to their own affairs, and a wolf might come and attack and kill Joseph.

In saying this he was really unwittingly giving a cue to the wicked ones, for they use that very excuse in verse 17 below.

Thus the wicked plot thickens, but there is a counter-plan also, which is drawing a noose of lies round the wicked ones, so that they are eventually driven into a corner, and have to confess their own guilt in verse 91 below, and through repentance obtain forgiveness.

قَالُواْ لَئِنْ أَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ (١٤)

14. They said:

"If the wolf were to devour him while we are (so large) a party, then should we indeed (first) have perished ourselves!"

C1645. Jacob's objections as stated could be easily rebutted, and the brethren did so. They would be eleven in the party, and the ten strong and grown-up men would have to perish before the wolf could touch the young lad Joseph!

So they prevailed, as verbal arguments are apt to prevail, when events are weaving their web on quite another Plan, which has nothing to do with verbal arguments. Presumably Benjamin was too young to go with them.

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُواْ بِهِ وَأَجْمَعُواْ أَن يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيَابَةِ الْجُبِّ...

15. So they did take him away, and they all agreed to throw him down to the bottom of the well:

...وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْهِ ...

and We put into his heart (this Message):

C1646. Allah was with Joseph in all his difficulties, sorrows, and sufferings, as He is with all His servants who put their trust in Him.

The poor lad was betrayed by his brothers, and left, perhaps to die or to be sold into slavery. But his heart was undaunted. His courage never failed him. On the contrary he had an inkling, a presentiment, of things that were to be-that his own rectitude and beauty of soul would land him on his feet, and perhaps some day, his brothers would stand in need of him, and he would be in a position to fulfil that need, and would do it gladly, putting them , to shame for their present plotting and betrayal of him.

... لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُم بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَـٰذَا وَهُمْ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ (١٥)

"Of a surety thou shalt (one day) tell them the truth of this their affair while they know (thee) not."

C1647. This situation actually occurred when Joseph later on became the governor of Egypt and his brothers stood before him suing for his assistance although they did not know that he was their betrayed brother;

see 12:89 below; also 12:58.

وَجَاؤُوا أَبَاهُمْ عِشَاء يَبْكُونَ (١٦)

16. Then they came to their father in the early part of the night, weeping.

C1648. The plotters were ready with their false tale for their father, but in order to make it appear plausible, they came some time after sundown, to show that they had made an effort to search for their brother and save him.

... قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ

17. They said: "Oh our father! we went racing with one another,

C1649. They wanted to make out that they were not negligent of Joseph. They were naturally having games and exercise, while the boy was left with their belongings. It was the racing that prevented them from seeing the wolf.

And Jacob's fears about the wolf (12:13 above) made them imagine that he would swallow the wolf story readily.

... وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِندَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ...

and left Joseph with our things: and the wolf devoured him...

...وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ (١٧)

But thou wilt never believe us even though we tell the truth."

C1650. They were surprised that Jacob received the story about the wolf with cold incredulity. So they grew petulant, put on an air of injured innocence, and bring out the blood-stained garment described in the next verse.

وَجَآؤُوا عَلَىٰ قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ...

18. They stained his shirt with false blood.

C1651. Joseph wore a garment of many colours, which was a special garment peculiar to him. If the brethren could produce it blood-stained before their father, they thought he would be convinced that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast.

But the stain on the garment was a stain of "false blood", -not the blood of Joseph, but the blood of a goat which the brethren had killed expressly for this purpose.

Their device, however, was not quite convincing because, as some Commentators have pointed out the garment was intact which is unconceivable if a wolf had indeed devoured Joseph. (R).

...قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا...

He said:

"Nay, but your minds have made up a tale (that may pass) with you.

C1652. Jacob saw that there had been some foul play, and he did not hesitate to say so. In effect he said

"Ah me! the tale you tell may be good enough for you, who invented it!

But what about me, your aged father?

What is there left in life for me now, with my beloved son gone?

And yet what can I do but hold my heart in patience and implore Allah's assistance?

I have faith, and I know that all that He does is for the best!"

...فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ...

(For me) patience is most fitting:

...وَاللّٰهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُونَ (١٨)

against that which ye assert, it is Allah (alone) whose help can be sought"...

... وَجَاءتْ سَيَّارَةٌ

19. Then there came a caravan of travellers:

C1653. Then comes the caravan of unknown - travellers Midianite or Arab merchants traveling to Egypt with merchandise, such as the balm of Gilead in Transjordania.

In accordance with custom the caravan was preceded by advance parties to search out water and pitch a camp near. They naturally went to the well and let down their bucket.

... فَأَرْسَلُواْ وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ...

they sent their water-carrier (for water), and he let down his bucket (into the well)...

...قَالَ يَا بُشْرَى هَـذَا غُلاَمٌ ...

He said: "Ah there! Good news! Here is a (fine) young man!

C1654. The water carrier is surprised and taken aback, when he finds a youth of comely appearance, innocent like an angel, with a face as bright as the sun!

What is he to make of it?

Anyhow, to see him is a delight! And he shouts it out as a piece of good news.

Some Commentators think that **"Bushra"**, the Arabic world for "Good news", is a proper noun, the name of the companion to whom he shouted. (R).

... وَأَسَرُّوهُ بِضَاعَةً...

So they concealed him as a treasure!

C1655. It was a caravan of merchants, and they think of everything in terms of the money to be made out of it!

Here was an unknown, unclaimed youth, of surpassing beauty, with apparently a mind as refined as was his external beauty. If he could be sold in the opulent slave markets of Memphis or whatever was the capital of the Hyksos Dynasty then ruling in Egypt, what a price he would fetch!

They had indeed lighted upon a treasure! And they wanted to conceal him lest he was another's slave and had run away from his master who might come and claim him! The circumstances were peculiar and the merchants were cautious.

Bidha'at: stock-in-trade; capital; money; wealth; treasure.

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٩)

But Allah knoweth well all that they do!

C1656. To different mind the situation appeared different.

Joseph must have felt keenly the edge of his brethren's treason.

His father Jacob was lost in the sorrow of the loss of his best-beloved son.

The brethren were exulting in their plan of getting rid of one whom they hated.

The merchants were gloating over their gains.

But the horizon of all was limited. Allah knew their deeds and their feelings and motives, and He was working out His own Plan.

Neither the best of us nor the worst of us know whither our Destiny is leading us-how evil plots are defeated and goodness comes to its own in marvelous ways!.

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ...

20. The (Brethren) sold him for a miserable price -- for a few dirhams counted out:

C1657. Dirham: from Greek, drachma, a small silver coin, which varied in weight and value at different times and in different States. (R).

وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ (٢٠)...

in such low estimation did they hold him!

C1658. There was mutual deceit on both sides.

The Brethren had evidently been watching to see what happened to Joseph. when they saw the merchants take him up and hide him, they came to claim his price as a run away slave, but dared not haggle over the price, lest their object, to get rid of him, should be defeated.

The merchants were shrewd enough to doubt the claim in their own minds; but they dared not haggle lest they should lose a very valuable acquisition.

And so the most precious of human lives in that age was sold into slavery for a few silver pieces! (R).

C.110 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(12:21-42)

Joseph was bought by a man high at Court
In Egypt, who asked his wife Zulaykha
To treat him with honour, with a view
To his adoption as a son. But she burnt

With a passion of early love for him,
When Joseph refused to yield to her solicitation,
There was trouble and scandal, and Joseph
Had to go to prison. Here were shown
His greatness, and kindness, and wisdom.
The King's cupbearer came in disgrace
To prison. Joseph instructed him and others
In the eternal Gospel of Unity. When released
And restored to favour, the cupbearer
Forgot Joseph-for a time-until
It pleased Allah to put into Joseph's hands,
The keys of the prosperity of Egypt and the world.

Section 3

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِن مِّصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهِ ...

21. The man in Egypt who bought him said to his wife:

C1659. Joseph is now clear of his jealous brethren in the land of Canaan. The merchants take him to Egypt. In the city of Memphis (or whatever was the Egyptian capital then) he was exposed for sale by the merchants.

The merchants had not miscalculated. There was a ready market for him; his handsome presence, his winning ways, his purity and innocence, his intelligence and integrity, combined with his courtesy and noble manliness, attracted all eyes to him. There was the keenest competition to purchase him, and in the highest Court circles. Every competitor was outbid by a high court official, who is called in verse 30 below "the 'Aziz"-(the Exalted in rank). (R).

أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ...

"Make his stay (among us) honorable:

C1660. See last note.

The 'Aziz's motive was perhaps worldly. Such a handsome, attractive, intelligent son would get him more honour, dignity, power and wealth. (R).

...عَسَى أَن يَنفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا...

maybe he will bring us much good, or we shall adopt him as a son."

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الأَرْضِ...

Thus did we establish Joseph in the land,

C1661. How unerringly Allah's plan works!

To teach Joseph wisdom and power, he had to be tested and proved in righteousness, and advanced and established in Egypt, and the way prepared for Israel and his posterity to proclaim Allah's truth to the world and to make possible the subsequent missions of Moses and Al Mustafa. (R).

...وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِن تَأْوِيلِ الأَحَادِيثِ...

that We might teach him the interpretation of stories (and events).

C1662. Ahadith might be stories, things imagined or related, things that happened, in life or in true dreams.

To suppose that phenomenal events are the only reality is a mark of one-sided materialism. As Hamlet said to Horatio, "there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

External events have their own limited reality, but there are bigger realities behind them, that sometimes appear darkly in the visions of ordinary men, but more clearly in the visions of poets, seers, sages and prophets.

Joseph had to be trained in seeing the realities behind events and visions. He was hated by his brothers and sold by them into slavery; they were sending him into the land of Egypt, where he was to rule men. He loved his father dearly and was separated from him, and his mother had died early; but his affection was not blunted, but drawn to a keener edge when his benevolent work benefited millions in Egypt, and in the world. His own

visions of stars, sun, and moon prostrating themselves before him, was no idle dream of a selfish fool, but the prefigurement of a power, which, used rightly, was to make his own honour an instrument of service to millions he had not seen, through men and women whose own power and dignity were sanctified through him.

He was to understand the hidden meaning of what seemed futilities, blunderings, snares, evil-plottings, love gone wrong, and power used tyrannically. He was to interpret truth to those who would never have reached it otherwise.

...وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٢١)

And Allah hath full power and control over His affairs;

but most among mankind know it not.

C1663.

Cf. "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will." Only, in Shakespeare, (Hamlet, V. 2), we have a vague and distant ideal, an irresolute striving, an unsuccessful attempt at getting beyond "this too, too solid flesh"!

In Joseph we have the Prophet of Allah, sure in faith, above all carnal motives, and advancing the destiny of mankind with a conscious purpose, as the scroll of knowledge, wisdom, and power, unfolds itself before him by the grace of Allah, All-Good and All-Powerful.

...وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا

22. When Joseph attained his full manhood, We gave him power and knowledge:

C1664. When Joseph left Canaan, he was a young and immature lad, but his nature was innocent and good. Through the vicissitudes of his fortune in Egypt, he grew in knowledge, judgment, and power.

...وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٢٢)

thus do We reward those who do right.

C1665. Muhsinin: those who do right, those who do good.

Both ideas are implied. In following right conduct, you are necessarily doing good to yourself and to others.

وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَن نَّفْسِهِ ...

23. But she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his (true) self:

C1666. The 'Aziz had treated Joseph with honour; he was more his guest and son than his slave. In trying to seduce Joseph in these circumstances, his wife was guilty of a crime against Joseph's own honour and dignity. And there was a third fault in her earthly love.

True love blots Self out: it thinks more of the loved one than of the Self. The 'Aziz's wife was seeking the satisfaction of her own selfish passion, and was in treason against Joseph's pure soul and his high destiny.

It was inevitable that Joseph should repel the advances made by the wife of the courtier. (R).

... وَغَلَّقَتِ الأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ...

she fastened the doors, and said: "Now come, thou (dear one)!"

...قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ...

He said: "Allah forbid!

...إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ...

truly (thy husband) is my lord!

He made my sojourn agreeable!

...إِنَّهُ لاَ يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٣)

Truly to no good come those who do wrong!"

C1667. Joseph's plea in rejecting her advances is threefold:

1. 'I owe a duty, and so do you, to your husband, the 'Aziz;

2. the kindness, courtesy, and honour, with which he has treated me entitled him to more than mere gratitude from me;
3. in any case, do you not see that you are harbouring a guilty passion, and that no good can come out of guilt? We must all obey laws, human and divine.' (R).

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَن رَّأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ...

24. And (with passion) did she desire him, and he would have desired her, but that he saw the evidence of his Lord:

C1668. She was blinded with passion, and his plea had no effect on her.

He was human after all, and her passionate love and her beauty placed a great temptation in his path. But he had a sure refuge,-his faith in Allah. His spiritual eyes saw something that her eyes, blinded by passion, did not see. She thought no one saw when the doors were closed. He knew that Allah was there. That made him strong and proof against temptation.

...كَذَٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ...

thus (did We order) that We might turn away from him (all) evil and shameful deeds:

C1669. The credit of our being saved from sin is due, not to our weak earthly nature, but to Allah. We can only try, like Joseph, to be true and sincere; Allah will purify us and save us from all that is wrong. Tempted but true, we rise above ourselves.

...إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٢٤)

for he was one of Our servants, sincere and purified.

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِن دُبُرٍ ...

25. So they both raced each other to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back:

C1670. With his master's wife in her mad passion, the situation became intolerable, and Joseph made for the door. She ran after him to detain him. She tugged at his garment to detain him. As he was retreating, she could

only catch hold of the back of his shirt, and in the struggle she tore it.

He was determined to open the door and leave the place, as it was useless to argue with her in her mad passion. When the door was opened, it so happened, that the 'Aziz was not far off. We need not assume that he was spying, or had any suspicions either of his wife or Joseph. In his narrow limited way he was a just man.

We can imagine his wife's consternation. One guilt leads to another. She had to resort to a lie, not only to justify herself but also to have her revenge on the man who had scorned her love. Slighted love (of the physical kind) made her ferocious, and she lost all sense of right and wrong. (R).

... وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَى الْبَابِ...

they both found her lord near the door.

...قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاء مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوَءًا إِلاَّ أَن يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ

أَلِيمٌ (٢٥)

She said: "What is the (fitting) punishment for one who formed an evil design against thy wife, but prison or a grievous chastisement?"

C1671. Her lie and her accusation were plausible. Joseph was found with his dress disarranged. She wanted the inference to be drawn that he had assaulted her and she had resisted. For one in his position it was a dreadful crime.

Should he not be consigned to a dungeon or at least scourged?

Perhaps she hoped that in either case he would be more pliable to her designs in the future.

...قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِي عَن نَّفْسِي

26. He said:

"It was she that sought to seduce me -- from my (true) self."

C1672. Joseph bore himself with dignity. He was too great and noble to indulge in angry recrimination. But he had to tell the truth. And he did it with quiet simplicity.

'The love game was hers, not his, and it went too far in seeking to assault his person.'

...وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا...

And one of her household saw (this) and bore witness, (thus) --

C1673. In the nature of things there was no eye-witness to what had happened between them. But as there was a scene and the whole household collected, wisdom came through one who was not immediately concerned.

They say it was a child. If so, it illustrates the truth that the most obvious things are not noticed by people who are excited, but are plain to simple people who remain calm. Wisdom comes often through babes and sucklings.

...إِن كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِن قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٢٦)

"If it be that his shirt is rent form the front, then is her tale true, and he is a liar!

وَإِنْ كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِن دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِن الصَّادِقِينَ (٢٧)

27. "But if it be that his shirt is torn from the back, then is she the liar, and he is telling the truth!"

C1674. If Joseph's shirt was torn at the back, he must obviously have been retreating, and the wife of the 'Aziz must have been tugging from behind.

No one could doubt who was the guilty party. Everybody saw it, and the 'Aziz was convinced. (R).

فَلَمَّا رَأَى قَمِيصَهُ قُدَّ مِن دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِن كَيْدِكُنَّ...

28. So when he saw his shirt -- that it was torn at the back -- (her husband) said:

"Behold! it is a snare of you women!

C1675. When the real fact became clear to every one, the 'Aziz as head of the household had to decide what to do.

His own position was difficult, and it was made ridiculous. He was a high officer of state, say Grand Chamberlain. Was he going to proclaim to the world that his wife was running after a slave?

He was probably fond of her, and he saw the innocence, loyalty, and sterling merit of Joseph. He must treat the whole affair as a woman's prank,-the madness of sex-love, and the tricks and snares connected with sex-love. He must take no further action but to rate his wife and do justice. (R).

...إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ (٢٨)

Truly, mighty is your snare!

...يُوسُفُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَـذَا

29. "O Joseph, pass this over!

...وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنبِكِ إِنَّكِ كُنتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ (٢٩)

(O wife), ask forgiveness for thy sin, for truly thou hast been at fault!"

C1676. As was only fair, he apologized to Joseph and begged him to give no further thought to the injury that had been done to him,

- first by the love-snare of his wife,
- secondly, by the utterly false charge made against him, and
- thirdly, by the scene, which must have been painful to a man of such spotless character as Joseph.

That was not enough. He must ask his wife humbly to beg Joseph's pardon for the wrong that she had done him. And he must further ask her to consider her unbecoming conduct in itself, apart from any wrong done to Joseph. (R).

Section 4

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَةُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَن نَّفْسِهِ...

30. Ladies said in the City:

"The wife of the (great) 'Aziz is seeking to seduce her slave from his (true) self:

C1677. 'Aziz: title of a nobleman or officer of Court, of high rank.

Considering all the circumstances, the office of Grand Chamberlain or minister may be indicated. But "Aziz" I think is a title, not an office. I have not translated the tide but left it as it is. "Excellency" or "Highness" would have specialized modem associations which I want to avoid.

...قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا...

truly hath he inspired her with violent love:

...إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٠)

we see she is evidently going astray."

C1678. The 'Aziz's just, wise, and discreet conduct would have closed the particular episode of his wife's guilty conduct if only Mrs. Grundy had left her alone and she had not foolishly thought of justifying her conduct to Mrs. Grundy.

The 'Aziz had reproved her, and he had the right and authority so to do. He also probably understood her.

Joseph by his behaviour had upheld the highest standard both for himself and for her. (R).

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَأً...

31. When (Zulaikha) heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them:

C1679. When her reputation began to be pulled to pieces, the wife of 'Aziz invited all ladies in society to a grand banquet.

We can imagine them reclining at ease after the manner of fashionable banquets. When dessert was reached and the talk flowed freely about the gossip and scandal which made their hostess interesting, they were just about to cut the fruit with their knives, when, behold! Joseph was brought into their midst. Imagine the consternation which his beauty caused, and the havoc it played with their hearts!

"Ah!" thought the wife of 'Aziz "now is your hypocrisy self-exposed! What about your reproaches to me?

You have yourselves so lost your self-control that you have cut your fingers!" (R).

...وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ...

she gave each of them a knife;

and she said (to Joseph), "Come out before them.

...فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ...

When they saw him, they did extol him, and (in their amazement) cut their hands: they said

...حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَـذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَـذَا إِلاَّ مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ (٣١)

"Allah preserve us!

no mortal is this!

This is none other than a noble angel!"

...قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَّنِي فِيهِ

32. She said:

"There before you is the man about whom ye did blame me!

...وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدتُّهُ عَن نَّفْسِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ...

I did seek to seduce him from his (true) self but he did firmly save himself guiltless!

C1680. Her speech is subtle, and shows that any repentance or compunction she may have felt is blotted out by the collective crowd mentality into which she has deliberately invited herself to fall.

Her speech falls into two parts, with a hiatus between, which I have marked by the punctuation mark (...).

In the first part there is a note of triumph, as much as to say, "Now you see! mine was no vulgar passion! you are just as susceptible! you would have done the same thing!"

Finding encouragement from their passion and their fellow-feeling, she openly avows as a woman amongst women what she would have been ashamed to acknowledge to others before. She falls a step lower and boasts of it. A step lower still, and she sneers at Joseph's innocence, his firmness in saving himself guiltless!

There is a pause. The tide of passion rises still higher, and the dreadful second part of her speech begins. It is a sort of joint consultation, though she speaks in monologue.

The women all agree that no man has a right to resist their solicitations. Beauty spurned is the highest crime. And so now She rises to the height of tragic guilt and threatens Joseph. She forgets all her finer feelings, and is overpowered by brute passion. After all, he is a slave and must obey his mistress! Or, there is prison, and the company of the vilest.

Poor, deluded, fallen creature! She sank lower than herself, in seeking the support of the crowd around her! What pain and suffering and sorrow can expiate the depth of this crime? (R).

...وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا آمُرُهُ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُونًا مِّنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ (٣٢)

And now, if he doth not my bidding, he shall certainly be cast into prison, and (what is more) be in the company of the vilest!"

...قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ

33. He said:

"O my Lord! the prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me:

C1681. "To which they invite me." Notice it is now "they" not "she".

Where there was the snare of one woman before, it is now the collective snare of many women - of womankind!

...وَإِلاَّ تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (٣٣)

unless thou turn away their snare from me, I should (in my youthful folly) feel inclined towards them and join the ranks of the ignorant."

C1682. Joseph's speech is characteristic.

Like a true Prophet of Allah, he takes refuge in Allah. He knows the weakness of human nature. He would not pit his own strength against the whole assault of evil. He will rely on Allah to turn evil away from him, and praise Him alone for any success he achieves in his fight.

It is only the ignorant who do not know man's weakness and Allah's strength!

...فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ

34. So his Lord heard him (in his prayer), and turned away from him their snare:

C1683. Joseph was saved from the wiles of the women, which would have degraded him. But more, his truth and character were completely vindicated in the eyes of all concerned by the avowal of the wife of the 'Aziz. (R).

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٣٤)

verily He heareth and knoweth (all things).

ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوُا الآيَاتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهُ حَتَّى حِينٍ (٣٥)

35. Then it occurred to the men, after they had seen the Signs, (that it was best) to imprison him for a time.

C1684. When Joseph's character was completely vindicated, there was no disgrace to him in being sent to prison after that. On the contrary the blame now would

attach to those who for their own selfish motives restricted his liberty for a time.

As a matter of fact various motives on the part of the many actors in this drama converged towards that end. For Joseph prison was better than the importunities of the women, and now, not one woman, but all society women were after him. To the women themselves it looked as if that was a lever which they could use to force his compliance. Vain, deluded creatures, to think that a man of God could be forced from the path of rectitude by threats or bribes.

To the 'Aziz it appears as if it might be in his wife's best interests that he should disappear from her view in prison. The decisive factor was the view of the men generally, who were alarmed at the consternation he had caused among the women.

They knew that Joseph was righteous: they had seen the Signs of Allah in his wonderful personality and his calm and confident fortitude. But, it was argued, it was better that one man (even if righteous) should suffer in prison rather than that many should suffer from the extraordinary disturbance he was unwittingly causing in their social life.

Not for the first nor for the last time did the righteous suffer plausibly for the guilt of the guilty. And so Joseph went to prison-for a time. (R).

Section 5

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانَ...

36. Now with him there came into the prison two young men.

C1685. Now opens another chapter in Joseph's life.

The Plan of Allah develops.

- The wicked might plot;
- the weak might be swayed by specious arguments;

but everything is used by the Universal Plan for its own beneficent purposes.

- Joseph must get into touch with the Pharaoh, in order to work out the salvation of Egypt, and yet it must be through no obligation to smaller men.

- And he must diffuse his personality and teach the truth to men of all sorts in prison.

...قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَآ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا...

Said one of them: "I see myself (in a dream) pressing wine."

...وَقَالَ الآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْزًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ...

Said the other: "I see myself (in a dream) carrying bread on my head, and birds are eating thereof."

C1686. Two men came to the prison about the same time as Joseph. They were both apparently officers of the king (the Pharaoh), who had incurred his wrath.

- One was a cup-bearer (or butler or chief steward) whose duty was to prepare the king's wines and drinks.

- The other was the king's baker, whose duty was to prepare the king's bread.

They were both in disgrace.

- The former dreamed that he was again carrying on his duties and pressing wine;

- the latter that he was carrying bread, but it did not reach his master, for the birds ate of it.

...نَبِّئْنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣٦)

"Tell us" (they said) "the truth and meaning thereof: for we see thou art one that doth good (to all)."

C1687. Both these men saw the Signs of Allah about Joseph. They felt not only that he had wisdom, but that he was kind and benevolent, and would give of his wisdom even to strangers like themselves.

They therefore told him their dreams and asked him to interpret them.

قَالَ لاَ يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلاَّ نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَن يَأْتِيكُمَا...

37. He said:

"Before any food comes (in due course) to feed either of you, I will surely reveal to you the truth and meaning of this ere it befall you:

C1688. The dream of one foreboded good to him, and of the other, evil to him.

It was good that each should prepare for his fate. But Joseph's mission was far higher than that of merely foretelling events. He must teach the truth of Allah and the faith in the Hereafter to both men.

He does that first before he talks of the events of their phenomenal life. And yet he does it so tenderly. He does not tantalize them. In effect he says.

> "You shall learn everything before our next meal, but let me first teach you Faith!"

...ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي...

that is part of the (Duty) which my Lord hath taught me.

C1689. Joseph does not preach a pompous sermon, or claim any credit to himself for placing himself at their service. He is just doing his duty, and the highest good he can do to them is to teach them Faith.

...إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لاَّ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّهِ وَهُم بِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٣٧)

I have (I assure you) abandoned the ways of a people that believe not in Allah and that (even) deny the Hereafter.

C1690. These men were Egyptians, perhaps steeped in materialism, idolatry, and polytheism. He must teach them the Gospel of Unity. And he does it simply, by appealing to his own experience.

I have found the Lord good; in prosperity and adversity I have been supported by Faith; in life no man can live by error or evil; perhaps one of you had done some wrong for which you find yourself here; perhaps one of you is

innocent in either case, will you not accept Faith and live for ever?

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَآئِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ...

38. "And I follow the ways of my fathers -- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;

C1691. Again the same note of personal modesty.

'You may think I am as young as you, or younger. Yes, but I have the heritage of great men renowned for wisdom and truth, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Surely what they knew is worthy of respect. Never did they swerve a hair's breadth from the Gospel of Unity.

It is not that we boast. It was Allah's grace that taught us and Allah's grace is teaching all mankind. But men show their ingratitude by inventing other so-called gods'.

مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَن نُّشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ...

and never could we attribute any partners whatever to Allah:

ذَٰلِكَ مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا...

يَشْكُرُونَ (٣٨)

that (comes) of the grace of Allah to us and to mankind:

yet most men are not grateful.

يَا صَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ ...

39. "O my two companions of the prison! (I ask you):

C1692. Note the personal touch again.

'Are we not also companions in misfortune?

And may I not speak to you on terms of perfect equality, -as one prisoner to another?

Well then, do you really think a conflict of heterogeneous gods is better than Allah, the One (and Only), Whose power is supreme and irresistible?' (R).

... أَأَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٣٩)

are many lords differing among themselves better, or Allah, the One, Supreme and Irresistible?

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِهِ إِلاَّ أَسْمَاء سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنتُمْ وَآبَآؤُكُم...

40. "If not Him, ye worship nothing but names which ye have named -- ye and your fathers --

C1693. 'If you name other gods, they are nothing but your inventions, -names which you and your fathers put forward without any reality behind them.

Who gave you authority to do any such thing?

The only reality is Allah. Authority can come from Him alone. It is only for Him to command. And He has distinctly commanded you to worship none other than Him. That is the only religion that is right, -that has stood and will stand and endure for ever. He has revealed it at all times by His Messengers and by His Signs. If men fail to understand, it is their own fault.

...مَّا أَنزَلَ اللّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلْطَانٍ...

for which Allah hath sent you no authority:

...إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلاَّ لِلّهِ...

the Command is for none but Allah:

...أَمَرَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُواْ إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ...

He hath commanded that ye worship none but Him:

...ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٠)

that is the right religion, but most men understand not...

يَا صَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ ...

41. "O my two companions of the prison!

C1694. Having fulfilled his great duty, that touching the things of the spirit, Joseph now passes on, and comes to the things in which they were immediately interested, -

the questions which they had asked him about their dreams and what they prognosticated of their immediate future.

Notice how Joseph again puts himself into sympathy with them by repeating the phrase of camaraderie. "my two companions of the prison!"

For one he has good news, and for the other, bad news. He does not mince matters or waste words. He just barely tells the truth, hoping that the higher spiritual truths of which he has spoken will appear in their eyes, too, as of more importance than mere earthly triumphs or disasters, -(in Kipling's words) "both impostors all the same."

... أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا...

as to one of you, he will pour out the wine for his lord to drink:

C1695. The cup-bearer had perhaps been proved innocent of the crime which had been charged against him, and was to be restored to the favour of the Pharaoh. He was to carry the cup and be the king's confidante again.

How much more good he could do now, after the spiritual influence he had imbibed from Joseph the man of God! He was more fortunate in having had Joseph's company than in being restored to his intimate position with the king! Yet he was not a perfect man, as we shall see presently.

...وَأَمَّا الآخَرُ فَيُصْلَبُ فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِن رَّأْسِهِ...

as for the other, he will hang from the cross, and the birds will eat from off his head.

C1696. For the baker, alas! he had bad news, and he tells it directly without tantalizing him.

Perhaps he had been found guilty -perhaps he had been really guilty- of some act of embezzlement or of joining in some palace intrigue, and he was to die a malefactor's death on the cross, following by exposure to birds of the air-vultures pecking away at his eyes and cheeks, and all that had been his face and head!

Poor man! If he was guilty, Joseph had taught him repentance, and we should like to think that he lost in this life but gained in the next.

If he was innocent, the cruel death did not affect him. Joseph had shown him a higher and more lasting hope in the Hereafter.

...قُضِيَ الأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِيَانِ (٤١)

(So) hath been decreed that matter whereof ye twain do enquire..."

...وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِندَ رَبِّكَ

42. And of the two, to that one whom he considered about to be saved, he said:

"Mention me to thy lord."

C1697. Joseph never mentioned himself in interpreting the dream, nor ever thought of himself in his kindness to his fellow-sufferers in prison.

It was afterwards, when the cup-bearer's dream came true, and he was being released on being restored to favour, that we can imagine him taking an affectionate leave of Joseph, and even asking him in his elation if he could do anything for Joseph. Joseph had no need of earthly favours,- least of all, from kings or their favorites. The divine grace was enough for him. But he had great work to do, which he could not do in prison- work for Egypt and her king, and the world at large.

If the cup-bearer could mention him to the king, not by way of recommendation, but because the king's own justice was being violated in keeping an innocent man in prison, perhaps that might help to advance the cause of the king and of Egypt. And so he said, "Mention me to Pharaoh."

...فَأَنسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ...

But Satan made him forget to mention him to his lord:

C1698. The eternal Plan does not put Allah's Prophets under obligations to men commanding mere worldly

favour or earthly power. If they are given a chance, the obligation is on the worldly men, however highly placed ...

In this case, the poor cup-bearer was but human. When he was in the midst of the Court, he forgot the poor fellow- prisoner languishing in prison. In this he yielded to the lower part of his nature, which is guided by Satan. (R).

فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ (٤٢)...

and (Joseph) lingered in prison a few (more) years.

C1699. **A few (more) years:** bid' in Arabic signifies a small indefinite number, say up to 3, 5, 7 or 9 years.

C.111 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose) (12:43-68)

The king of Egypt saw a vision
Which none of his grandees could explain.
The cupbearer referred to Joseph,
Who was sent for by the king. But Joseph
Insisted that the voice of scandal,
Which had pointed to him, should be declared
In public to be false. After Zulaykha
Had paid a splendid ungrudging tribute
To his truth and righteousness, he came,
And was invested with supreme power
By the king. In times of plenty he organized
Great reserves to meet the needs
Of famine. When wide-spread famine at last
Prevailed, his brothers came from Canaan
In search of corn. He treated them kindly
And got them to bring his youngest brother
Benjamin; but they knew not that he was Joseph.

Section 6

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ...

43. The king (of Egypt) said:

C1700. The Pharaoh is holding a Council. His confidential adviser the cup-bearer is present. The Pharaoh relates his double dream, -of seven fat kine being devoured by seven lean ones, and of seven fine full green ears of corn (presumably being devoured) by seven dry withered ears.

... إِنِّي أَرَى سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ ...

"I do see (in a vision) seven fat kine, whom seven lean ones devour --

...وَسَبْعَ سُنبُلاَتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ...

and seven green ears of corn, and seven (others) withered.

...يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُؤْيَايَ إِن كُنتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ (٤٣)

O ye chiefs! expound to me my vision if it be that ye can interpret visions."

قَالُواْ أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلاَمٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الأَحْلاَمِ بِعَالِمِينَ (٤٤)

44. They said:

"A confused medley of dreams: and we are not skilled in the interpretation of dreams."

C1701. No one in the Council apparently wanted to take the responsibility either of interpreting the dream, or of carrying out any measures consequent on the interpretation.

وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَاْ أُنَبِّئُكُم بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ (٤٥)

45. But the man who had been released, one of the two (who had been in prison) and who now bethought him after (so long) a space of time, said:

"I will tell you the truth of its interpretation: send ye me (therefor)."

C1702. At length the cup-bearer's conscience was awakened. He thought of Joseph. He (Joseph) was a truthful man, and the cup-bearer knew by personal experience how skillful he was in the interpretation of dreams. Perhaps he could get him released at this juncture by getting him to interpret the king's dream.

If he had been frank, straight, and direct, he would have mentioned Joseph at once, and presented him to Pharaoh. But he had worldly subtlety. He wanted some credit for himself, at the same time that he fulfilled an old obligation.

His petty conscience would be satisfied if he got Joseph's release, but meanwhile he wanted to see how much attention he could draw to himself in the court. So he just asked permission to withdraw in order to find the interpretation. He went straight to the prison, and addressed himself to Joseph, as in the following verse.

يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي...

46. "O Joseph!" (he said), "O man of truth! expound to us (the dream) of

سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعِ سُنبُلاَتٍ خُضْرٍ...

وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ...

seven fat kine whom seven lean ones devour, and of seven green ears of corn and (seven) others withered:

لَّعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٦)...

that I may return to the people, and that they may understand."

C1703. The speech must have been longer, to explain the circumstances. We are just given the points. From Joseph he conceals nothing. He knows that Joseph knows more than himself. He tells Joseph that if he got the meaning, he would go and tell the Council.

It would be impertinent for the cup-bearer to hold out to Joseph, the Prophet of Allah, the bribe of the hope of his release. Notice how blandly he avoids referring to his own lapse in having forgotten Joseph so long, and how

the magnanimous Joseph has not a word of reproach, but gets straight on with the interpretation. (R).

قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَأَبًا...

47. (Joseph) said:

"For seven years shall ye diligently sow as is your wont:

...فَمَا حَصَدتُّمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنبُلِهِ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ (٤٧)

and the harvests that ye reap, ye shall leave them in the ear -- except a little, of which ye shall eat.

C1704. Joseph not only shows what will happen, but, unasked, suggests the measures to be taken for dealing with the calamity when it comes.

There will be seven years of abundant harvest. With diligent cultivation they should get bumper crops. Of them they should take a little for their sustenance and store the rest in the ear, the better to preserve it from the pests that attack corn-heaps when they have passed through the threshing floor.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ...

48. "Then will come after that (period) seven dreadful (years), which will devour what ye shall have laid by in advance for them --

...إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً مِّمَّا تُحْصِنُونَ (٤٨)

(all) except a little which ye shall have (specially) guarded.

C1705. There will follow seven years of dreadful famine, which will devour all the stores which they will have laid by in the good years.

They must be careful, even during the famine, not to consume all the grain; they must by special arrangement save a little for seed, lest they should be helpless even when the Nile brought down abundant waters from the rains at its sources.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصِرُونَ (٤٩)

49. "Then will come after that (period) a year in which the people will have abundant water, and in which they will press (wine and oil)."

C1706. This is a symbol of a very abundant year, following the seven years of drought. The Nile must have brought abundant fertilising waters and silt from its upper reaches, and there was probably some rain also in Lower Egypt. The vine and the olive trees, which must have suffered in the drought, now revived, and yielded their juice and their off, among the annuals, also, the oil seeds such as , sesame, and the castor oil plant, must have been grown, as there was irrigated land and to spare from the abundant grain crops.

And the people's spirits revived, to enjoy the finer products of the earth, when their absolute necessities had been more than met in their grain crops.

Section 7

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي...

50. So the king said:

"Bring ye him unto me."

C1707. The cup-bearer must have reported Joseph's interpretation to the king, and the king naturally wanted to see Joseph himself. He sent a messenger to fetch him.

...بِهِ فَلَمَّا جَاءهُ الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَى رَبِّكَ...

But when the messenger came to him, (Joseph) said: "Go thou back to thy lord,

...فَاسْأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ النِّسْوَةِ اللاَّتِي قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ...

and ask him, 'What is the state of mind of the ladies who cut their hands?'

C1708. The king's messenger must have expected that a prisoner would be only too overjoyed at the summons of the king. But Joseph, sure of himself, wanted some assurance that he would be safe from the sort of nagging and persecution to which he had been subjected by the ladies.

We saw in verse 33 above that he preferred prison to their solicitations. He must therefore know what was in the mind of the women now.

...إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ (٥٠)

for my Lord is certainly well aware of their snare."

C1709. If the king ("thy Lord") did not know of all the snares which had been laid for Joseph by the ladies. Allah **("my Lord")** knew all their secret motives and plots.

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ إِذْ رَاوَدتُّنَّ يُوسُفَ عَن نَّفْسِهِ...

51. (The king) said (to the ladies): "What was your affair when ye did seek to seduce Joseph from his (true) self?"

C1710. Joseph's message was conveyed by the messenger to the king, who sent for the ladies concerned. Among them came the wife of the 'Azlz.

"What was this affair?" said the king: "tell me the whole truth". (R).

...قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِن سُوءٍ...

The ladies said: "Allah preserve us! no evil know we against him!"

...قَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ الْعَزِيزِ ...

Said the 'Aziz's wife:

...الآنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَاوَدتُّهُ عَن نَّفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ

الصَّادِقِينَ (٥١)

"Now is the truth manifest (to all):

it was I who sought to seduce him from his (true) self:

he is indeed of those who are (ever) true (and virtuous).

C1711. The wife of the 'Aziz stood by, while the other ladies answered. Their answer acknowledged the truth of Joseph's innocence and high principles. When they had done, she began. She did not mince matters. She acknowledged her own guilt, freely and frankly.

This was no time for her even to refer to other ladies - their jealousy, their gross mindedness, their encouragement of all that frail or evil in herself. (R).

ذَٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ...

52. "This (say I), in order that he may know that I have never been false to him in his absence,

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ (٥٢)

and that Allah will never guide the snare of the false ones.

C1712. I construe verses 52 and 53 to be a continuation of the speech of the 'Aziz's wife and have translated accordingly. There is both good reason and authority (e.g., Ibn Kathir) for this.

But the majority of Commentators construe verses 52-53 to be spoken by Joseph, in which case they would mean that Joseph was referring to his fidelity to the 'Aziz, that he had never taken advantage of his absence to play false with his wife, although he (Joseph) was human and liable to err.

In my view the 'Aziz's wife while fully reprobating her own guilty conduct, claims that she has at least been constant, and that she hopes for mercy, forgiveness, and the capacity to understand at last what true love is. Whatever false charge she made, she made it in a moment of passion and to his face, (never in cold blood, or behind his back).

Guide the snare of the false ones, i.e. allow such snare to attain its goal. (R).

وَمَا أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِي...

53. "Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame):

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّيَ...

the (human soul) is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy:

C1712a. Ammara: prone, impelling, headstrong, passionate.

See n. 5810 to 75:2.

...إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٥٣)

but surely certainly my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

C1713. See n. 1712.

1 construe this verse to be a continuation of the speech of the wife of the 'Aziz. It is more appropriate to her than to Joseph. (R).

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ أَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِي...

54. So the king said:

"Bring him unto me; I will take him specially to serve about my own person."

C1714. Joseph had not yet appeared before the king. The king's order in the same terms in verse 50 above had led to a message from Joseph and the subsequent public proceedings with the ladies.

Now that Joseph's innocence, wisdom, truth, and trustworthiness had been Proved, and confirmed by the splendid tribute of the courtier's wife, and Joseph's own manly bearing before the king, the king was much impressed, and took him specially to serve about his own person as his trusty and confidential Wazir.

If, as is probable, the 'Aziz had by this time died (for he is never mentioned again) Joseph succeeded to his office, and he is addressed as 'Aziz in verse 78 below. But Joseph got more than his rank and powers, as specially selected to carry out a great emergency policy to meet the very difficult times of depression that were foretold.

He was given plenary powers and the fullest confidence that a king could give to his most trusted and best-proved Wazir or Prime Minister, with special access to his Person, like a Grand Chamberlain. (R).

فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ أَمِينٌ (٥٤)...

Therefore when he had spoken to him, he said:

"Be assured this day, thou art, before our own Presence, with rank firmly established and fidelity fully proved!"

C1715. Who was this Pharaoh, and what approximate date could we assign to him?

He was probably a king of the Hyksos Dynasty, somewhere between the 19th and the 17th century B.C.

See Appendix IV, on Egyptian Chronology and Israel (printed after Surah 7).

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَآئِنِ الأَرْضِ ...

55. (Joseph) said:

"Set me over the storehouses of the land:

C1716. Joseph had been given plenary authority by the king. He could have enjoyed his dignity, drawn his emoluments, put the hard and perhaps unpopular work on the shoulders of others, and kept to himself the glitter and the kudos. But that was not his way, nor can it indeed be the way of any one who wants to do real service.

He undertook the hardest and most unpopular task himself. Such a task was that of organizing reserves in times of plenty, against the lean years to come. He deliberately asked to be put in charge of the granaries and store-houses, and the drudgery of establishing them and guarding them, for the simple reason that he understood that need better than any one else, and was prepared to take upon himself rather than throw on to another the obloquy of restricting supplies in times of plenty.

... إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ (٥٥)

I will indeed guard them, as one that knows (their importance)."

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الأَرْضِ يَتَبَوَّأُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ...

56. Thus did We give established power to Joseph in the land, to take possession therein as, when ,or where he pleased.

C1717. What a wonderful example of the working of divine Providence!

The boy whom his jealous brothers got rid of by selling him into slavery for a miserable price becomes the most trusted dignitary in a foreign land, chief minister in one of the greatest empires of the world of that day. And this not for himself only, but for his family, and for that noble example of righteousness and strenuous service, which he was to set for all time.

According to tradition, Joseph's age was barely 30 at that time!

As when, or where he pleased: haithu refers to manner, time, or place.

He had almost absolute powers, but as his fidelity was fully proved (12:53) these powers were for service rather than for self. (R).

...نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَن نَّشَاء...

We bestow of Our mercy on whom We please,

...وَلاَ نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٦)

and We suffer not, to be lost, the reward of those who do good.

وَلَأَجْرُ الآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَكَانُواْ يَتَّقُونَ (٥٧)

57. But verily the reward of the Hereafter is the best, for those who believe, and are constant in righteousness.

C1718. To the righteous, whatever rewards (if any) that come in this world are welcome for the opportunities of service which they open out. But the true and best reward is in the Hereafter.

... وَجَاء إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ

58. Then came Joseph's brethren:

C1719. Years pass; the times of prosperity go by: famine holds the land in its grip; and it extends to neighbouring countries.

Joseph's preparations are complete. His reserves are ample to meet the calamity. Not only does Egypt bless him, but neighbouring countries send to Egypt to purchase corn. All are received with hospitality, and corn is sold to them according to judicious measure.

Now there has been one sorrow gnawing at Joseph's heart. His poor father Jacob! How he must have wept, as indeed he did, at the loss of his beloved Joseph!

And Joseph's little brother Benjamin, born of the same mother as himself; would the other ten brothers, not by the same mother, have any affection for him, or would they treat him, as they treated Joseph?

How would the whole family be in these hard times?

A sort of answer came when the ten selfish brothers, driven by famine, came from Canaan to buy corn. Joseph, though so great a man, kept the details of the famine department in his own hands, otherwise there might have been waste. But to the public he was a mighty Egyptian administrator, probably in Egyptian dress, and with all the paraphernalia of his rank about him.

When his brothers came, he knew them, but they did not know he was Joseph. In their thoughts was probably some menial slave in a remote household, perhaps already starved to death in these hard times!

... فَدَخَلُواْ عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنكِرُونَ (٥٨)

they entered his presence, and he knew them, but they knew him not.

Section 8

...وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ

59. And when he had furnished them forth with provisions (suitable) for them, he said:

"Bring unto me a brother ye have, of the same father as yourselves, (but a different mother):

...أَلاَ تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَاْ خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ (٥٩)

see ye not that I pay out full measure, and that I do provide the best hospitality?

C1720. Joseph treated his brothers liberally. Perhaps he condescended to enter into conversation with these strangers, and enquired about their family. The ten brothers had come.

Had they left a father behind them?

What sort of a person was he? Very aged?

Well, of course he could not come. Had they any other brothers?

Doubtless the ten brothers said nothing about their lost Joseph, or told some lie about him.

But perhaps their host's kindly insistence brought Benjamin into the conversation. How old was he? Why had they not brought him? Would they bring him next time?

Indeed they must, or they would get no more corn, and he-the great Egyptian Wazir-would not even see them.

فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلاَ كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِندِي وَلاَ تَقْرَبُونِ (٦٠)

60. "Now if ye bring him not to me, ye shall have no measure (of corn) from me,

nor shall be ye (even) come near me."

قَالُواْ سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ (٦١)

61. They said: "We shall certainly seek to get our wish about him from his father: indeed we shall do it."

C1721. The brothers said: "Certainly, we shall try to beg him of our father, and bring him away with us; we shall certainly comply with your desire."

In reality they probably loved Benjamin no more than they loved Joseph. But they must get food when the present supply was exhausted, and they must humour the great Egyptian Wazir.

Note that they do not call Jacob "our father" but "his father"; how little they loved their aged father, whom they identified with Joseph and Benjamin! Their trial and their instruction in their duties is now being undertaken by Joseph.

وَقَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُواْ بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا...

62. And (Joseph) told his servants to put their stock in trade (with which they had bartered) into their saddlebags,

C1722. Bidha'at: stock in trade; capital with which business is carried on; money-when it is used as capital for trade.

It is better here to suppose that they were bartering goods for grain. Cf. 12:19.

...إِذَا انقَلَبُواْ إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٦٢)

so they should know it only when they returned to their people, in order that they might come back.

C1723. It was most important for Joseph's plan that they should come back. If they came back at all, they could not come without Benjamin after what he had told them.

As an additional incentive to their coming back, he returns the price of the grain in such a way that they should find it in their saddle-bags when they reach home.

فَلَمَّا رَجِعُوا إِلَى أَبِيهِمْ قَالُواْ...

63. Now when they returned to their father, they said:

...يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا أَخَانَا نَكْتَلْ...

"O our father! no more measure of grain shall we get (unless we take our brother):

so send our brother with us, that we may get our measure;

...وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (٦٣)

and we will indeed take every care of him."

C1724. On their return they no doubt told Jacob all that had transpired. But to beg Benjamin of him was no easy matter, as Jacob did not trust them and had no cause to trust them after their treatment of Joseph, So they use the argument of urgent necessity for all it is worth.

قَالَ هَلْ آمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلاَّ كَمَا أَمِنتُكُمْ عَلَى أَخِيهِ مِن قَبْلُ...

64. He said: "Shall I trust you with him with any result other than when I trusted you with his brother aforetime?

...فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا...

But Allah is the best to take care (of him),

...وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (٦٤)

and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!"

C1725. I construe Jacob's answer to be a flat refusal to let Benjamin go with them. It would be like the former occasion when he trusted Joseph with them and they lost him.

Did they talk of taking care of him?

The only protection that he trusted was that of Allah. He at least showed mercy to old and young alike. Did man show such mercy?

Witness his sad old age and his lost little Joseph! Would they bring down "his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?"

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُواْ مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُواْ بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ...

65. Then when they opened their baggage, they found their stock in trade had been returned to them.

...قَالُواْ يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي هَـذِهِ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا...

They said:

"O our father! what (more) can we desire?

This our stock in trade has been returned to us:

C1726. The ten brothers did not take their father's refusal as final. They opened their saddle-bags, and

found that the price they had paid for their provisions had been returned to them. They had got the grain free!

What more could they desire?

The spell which Joseph had woven now worked. If they only went back, this kind Wazir would give more grain if they pleased him. And the only way to please him was to take back their younger brother with them. It would cost them nothing. Judging by past experience they would get a whole camel's load of grain now. And so they stated their case to the aged father.

...وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ...

so we shall get (more) food for our family;

we shall take care of our brother; and add (at the same time) a full camel's load (of grain to our provisions):

...ذَٰلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ (٦٥)

this is but a small quantity."

C1727. Two meanings are possible,

- either or perhaps both. 'What we have brought now is nothing compared to what we shall get if we humour the whim of the Egyptian Wazir.
- And, moreover, Egypt seems to have plenty Of grain stored up. What is a camel-load to her Wazir to give away?'

...قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ...

66. (Jacob) said:

"Never will I send him with you until ye swear a solemn oath to me, in Allah's name,

...لَتَأْتُنَّنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَن يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ...

that ye will be sure to bring him back to me unless ye are yourselves hemmed in (and made powerless)."

C1728. The appeal to the family's needs in the time of famine at length made Jacob relent, but he exacted a solemn promise from the brothers, under the most

religious sanctions, that they would bring Benjamin back to him, unless they were themselves prevented, as the Insurance Policies say "by an act of God," so that they became really powerless. To that promise Jacob called Allah to witness.

فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ (٦٦)...

And when they had sworn their solemn oath, he said:

"Over all that we say, be Allah the Witness and Guardian!"

C1729. This is more than a formula. Allah is invoked as present and witnessing the bargain, and to Him both parties make over the affair to arrange and fulfil.

وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لاَ تَدْخُلُواْ مِن بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ...

67. Further he said;

"O my sons! enter not all by one gate:

C1730. The Commentators refer to a Jewish or Eastern custom or superstition which forbade members of a numerous family to go together in a mass for fear of "the evil eye". But apart from East or West, or custom or superstition, it would be ridiculous for any large family of ten or eleven to parade together in a procession among strangers. But there was even a better reason in this particular case, which made Jacob's advice sound, and Jacob was, as stated in the next verse, a man of knowledge and experience.

Here were eleven strangers dressed alike, in a dress not of the country, talking a strange language, coming in a time of stress, on an errand for which they had no credentials. Would they not attract undue attention and suspicion if they went together? Would they not be taken for spies? - or for men bent on some mischief, theft, or organized crime? Such a suspicion is referred to in verse 73 below. By entering separately they would attract little attention.

Jacob very wisely tells them to take all human precautions. But like a Prophet of Allah he warns them that human precautions would be no good if they neglect

or run counter to far weightier matters-Allah's Will and Law.

Above all, they must try to understand and obey this, and their trust should be on Allah rather than on human usages, institutions, or precautions, however, good and reasonable these might be. (R).

...وَادْخُلُواْ مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ...

enter ye by different gates.

...وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنكُم مِّنَ اللّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ...

Not that I can profit you aught against Allah (with my advice):

...إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلاَّ لِلّهِ...

none can command except Allah:

...عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (٦٧)...

on Him do I put my trust and let all that trust put their trust on Him."

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمْ أَبُوهُم...

68. And when they entered in the manner their father had enjoined,

...مَّا كَانَ يُغْنِي عَنْهُم مِّنَ اللّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ ...

it did not profit them in the least against (the Plan of) Allah:

C1731. See the last verse and n. 1730.

Though they scrupulously observed their father's injunctions to the letter, their hearts were not yet pure, and they got into trouble, as the later story will show.

They had the hardihood to cast aspersions on Joseph, not knowing that they were in Joseph's power. And Joseph took a noble revenge by planning a reunion of the whole family and shaming the ten brothers into repentance. He was the instrument for the fulfilment of Allah's Plan.

... إِلاَّ حَاجَةً فِي نَفْسِ يَعْقُوبَ قَضَاهَا...

it was but a necessity of Jacob's soul, which he discharged.

C1732. It is a necessity of a Prophet's soul that he should speak out and teach all that he knows, to the worthy and unworthy alike.

This, Jacob did to his unworthy sons, as well as to his worthy sons whom he loved best. It was not for him as Prophet to guarantee any results. In this case he could not save his sons from getting into trouble merely because they followed the letter of his advice in a small matter.

Apply this to the teaching of one who is greater than Jacob. Men who literally observe some small injunctions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and neglect the greater principles which he taught cannot blame him for their troubles and difficulties. If they examined the matter, they would find that they brought the troubles on themselves.

...وَإِنَّهُ لَذُو عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٦٨)

For he was, by Our instruction, full of knowledge (and experience):

but most men know not.

C1733. The Prophets of Allah are full of knowledge, -not as men, but as taught by the grace of Allah. For men, as such, are (Carlyle said) mostly fools,-devoid of knowledge and understanding. (R).

C.112 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(12:69-93)

When the brothers went back without Benjamin,
Jacob was overwhelmed with grief, but he bore
His affliction with patience and faith in Allah,
He refused to be comforted and sent his sons back,
To Egypt. At last Joseph revealed himself,
Forgave them, and sent his shirt by them
To Jacob, to tell him the good news

That Joseph lived and did great work
In Egypt, and had sent for his whole family
To come and rejoice and live in the land
Of Egypt, and be a blessing to all.

Section 9

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ عَلَى يُوسُفَ ...

69. Now when they came into Joseph's presence,

C1734. The ten brothers, with Benjamin, arrived in Egypt, and waited on the great Wazir. Joseph again received them hospitably, even more so than before, as they had complied with his request to bring Benjamin.

No doubt many shrewd and probing questions were asked by Joseph, and no doubt it was clear that Benjamin was one apart from the other ten.

Baydawi fills up the picture of the great feast for us. The guests were seated two by two. Baydawi was the odd one, and Joseph courteously took him to his own table.

... آوَى إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ...

he received his (full) brother to stay with him.

C1735. After the feast the question of lodgings arose. They were to be accommodated two by two. Again Benjamin was the odd one.

What more natural than that the Wazir should take him to himself He thus got a chance of privacy with him. He disclosed his identity to him, charging him to keep it a secret, and to take no notice of any strange doings that might occur.

He must have learnt from Benjamin about his father and about the inner doings of the family. He must get them all together into Egypt under his own eye. He had a plan, and he proceeded to put it into execution.

...قَالَ إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ فَلاَ تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ (٦٩)

He said (to him): "Behold! I am thy (own) brother; so grieve not at aught of their doings."

C1736. The past tense of **Kanu**, combined with the aorist of **Ya'malan**, signifies that the reference is to their brothers' doings, past, present, and future.

Benjamin was not to mind what wrongs they had done in the past, or how they behaved in the present or the immediate future. Joseph had a plan that required Benjamin's silence in strange circumstances.

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ...

70. At length when he had furnished them forth with provisions (suitable) for them, he put the drinking cup into his brother's saddlebag.

...ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَيَّتُهَا الْعِيرُ إِنَّكُمْ لَسَارِقُونَ (٧٠)

Then shouted out a Crier: "O ye (in) the Caravan! Behold! ye are thieves, without doubt!"

C1737. Joseph's plan was to play a practical joke on them, which would achieve two objects.

- Immediately it would put them into some consternation, but nothing comparable to what he had suffered at their hands. When the plan was unraveled, it would make them thoroughly ashamed of themselves, and dramatically bring home their guilt to them.
- Secondly, it would give him an excuse to detain Benjamin and bring their aged father into Egypt.

He contrived that a valuable drinking cup should be concealed in Benjamin's saddle-bag. When it was found after an ostentatious search, he would detain the supposed culprit, and attain his object, as the story relates further on.

قَالُواْ وَأَقْبَلُواْ عَلَيْهِم مَّاذَا تَفْقِدُونَ (٧١)

71. They said, turning towards them: "What is it that ye miss?"

قَالُواْ نَفْقِدُ صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَن جَاء بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَاْ بِهِ زَعِيمٌ (٧٢)

72. They said:

"We miss the great beaker of the king; for him who produces it, is (the reward of) a camel-load; I will be bound by it."

قَالُواْ تَاللّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُم مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سَارِقِينَ (٧٣)

73. (The brothers) said: "By Allah! well ye know that we came not to make mischief in the land, and we are no thieves!"

C1738. As strangers in a strange land, they were liable to be suspected as spies or men who meditated some unlawful design, or some crime, such as theft, which would be common in a season of scarcity. The brothers protested against the absurdity of such a suspicion after they had been entertained so royally by the Wazir.

قَالُواْ فَمَا جَزَآؤُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ كَاذِبِينَ (٧٤)

74. (The Egyptians) said: "What then shall be the penalty of this, if ye are (proved) to have lied?"

C1739. "That might be all very well," said the Egyptians, "but what if it is found by a search that you have in fact abused the Wazir's hospitality by stealing a valuable cup?"

قَالُواْ جَزَآؤُهُ مَن وُجِدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ...

75. They said:

"The penalty should be that he in whose saddle bag it is found, should be held (as bondman) to atone for the (crime).

C1740. We must try to picture to ourselves the mentality of the ten, They understood each other perfectly, in their sins as well as in other things. For themselves, the search held out no fears. Besides they had had no opportunity of stealing.

But what of that young fellow Benjamin?

They were ready to believe anything against him, the more so as the Wazir's partiality for him had lent a keen edge to their jealousy. Judging by their own standards, they would not be surprised if he had stolen, seeing that

he had had such opportunities-sitting at the High Table and staying with the Wazir.

They felt very self-righteous at the same time that they indulged in the luxury of accusing in their thoughts the most innocent of men! Supposing he had stolen, here would be a fine opportunity of getting rid of him.

What about their solemn oath to their father?

Oh! that was covered by the exception. He had done for himself. They had done all they could to protect him, but they were powerless. The old man could come and see for himself.

كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٧٥)...

Thus it is we punish the wrongdoers!"

C1741. This was their family custom. It was of course long anterior to the Mosaic Law, which laid down full restitution for theft, and if the culprit had nothing, he was to be sold for his theft (Exod. 22:5).

But here the crime was more than theft. It was theft, lying, and the grossest abuse of confidence and hospitality. While the ten felt a secret satisfaction in suggesting the penalty, they were unconsciously carrying out Joseph's plan. Thus the vilest motives often help in carrying out the most beneficent plans.

فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَتِهِمْ ...

76. So he began (the search) with their baggage,

C1742. The pronoun "he" can only refer to Joseph. He may have been present all the time, or he may just have come up, as the supposed theft of the king's own cup (12:72 above) was a very serious and important affair, and the investigation required his personal supervision.

All that his officers did by his orders was his own act. As the lawyers say: *Qui facit per alium, facit per se* (whoever does anything through another, does it himself).

... قَبْلَ وِعَاء أَخِيهِ...

before (he came to) the baggage of his brother:

C1743. The Arabic word here used is wi'ai, plural aw'iya, which includes bags, lockers, boxes, or any receptacles in which things are stored.

Notice the appropriateness of the words used. The cup was concealed in a saddle-bag (rahl), verse 70 above. When it comes to searching, they must search all the baggage of every description if the search was to be convincing and effective.

...ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِن وِعَاء أَخِيهِ...

at length He brought it out of his brother's baggage.

C1744. It refers to the drinking cup, the *siqayat*, which is a feminine noun: hence the feminine pronoun (*ha*) in Arabic.

...كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ...

Thus did We plan for Joseph.

...مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلاَّ أَن يَشَاء اللّهُ...

He could not take his brother by the law of the king except that Allah willed it (so).

C1745. Let no one suppose that it was a vulgar or wicked trick, such as we sometimes hear of in police courts, when property is planted on innocent men to get them into trouble.

On the contrary it was a device or stratagem whose purpose was to show up wickedness in its true colours, to give it a chance of repentance, to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation, to give solace to the aged father who had suffered so much.

Joseph was a Prophet of Allah, but he could not have carried out his plan or taken the first step, of detaining his brother, except with the will and permission of Allah, Whose Plan is universal and for all His creatures. (R).

...نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَّن نَّشَاء...

We raise to degrees (of wisdom) whom We please:

C1746. If we examine this world's affairs, there are all sorts of plans, and all degrees of folly and wisdom.

The wicked ones plan; the foolish ones plan; the simple ones plan; then there are men who think themselves wise and are perhaps thought to be wise, but who are foolish, and they have their plans; and there are degrees of real and beneficent wisdom among men.

Allah, is above all. Anything good in our wisdom is but a reflection of His wisdom, and His wisdom can even turn folly and wickedness to good.

...وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧٦)

but over all endued with knowledge is One, the All-Knowing.

...قَالُواْ إِن يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَّهُ مِن قَبْلُ...

77. They said:

"If he steals, there was a brother of his who did steal before (him)."

C1747. The hatred of the Ten for Joseph and Benjamin comes out again. They are not only ready to believe evil of Benjamin, but they carry their thoughts back to Joseph and call him a thief as well.

They had injured Joseph; and by a false charge of this kind they salve their conscience. Little did they suspect that Joseph was before them under another guise, and their falsehood and treachery, would soon be exposed.

...فَأَسَرَّهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَلَمْ...

But these things did Joseph keep locked in his heart, revealing not the secrets to them.

C1748. There were many secrets:

- that he was Joseph himself;

- that his brother Benjamin knew him;
- that there was no guilt in Benjamin, but the whole practical joke was in furtherance of a great plan (see n. 1745, above);
- that they were giving themselves away, and were unconsciously facilitating the plan, though their motives were not above-board.

...يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ قَالَ أَنتُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا...

He (simply) said (to himself): "Ye are the worse situated;

C1749. "Ah!" thought Joseph, "you think that Benjamin is safely out of the way, and that Joseph was got rid of long since! Would you be surprised to know that you have given yourselves away, that you are now in the power of Joseph, and that Joseph is the very instrument of your exposure and (let us hope) of your repentance?"

...وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ (٧٧)

and Allah knoweth best the truth of what ye assert!"

... قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا

78. They said:

"O exalted one! Behold! he has a father, aged and venerable, (who will grieve for him):

C1750. 1 have translated the title of 'Aziz here as "the exalted one" when addressed to Joseph in order not to cause confusion with the other man, the 'Aziz the Courtier, who had bought Joseph on arrival in Egypt.

See 12:30 above, and notes 1677 and 1714.

... فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ...

so take one of us in his place:

...إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٧٨)

for we see that thou art (gracious) in doing good."

قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَن نَّأْخُذَ إِلاَّ مَن وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِندَهُ إِنَّـآ إِذًا لَّظَالِمُونَ (٧٩)

79. He said:

"Allah forbid that we take other than him with whom we found our property: indeed (if we did so), we should be acting wrongfully."

C1751. There is a little sparring now between the Ten and Joseph. They are afraid of meeting their father's wrath, and he holds them strictly to the bargain which they had themselves suggested.

Section 10

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْأَسُواْ مِنْهُ خَلَصُواْ نَجِيًّا...

80. Now when they saw no hope of his (yielding), they held a conference in private.

...قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ ...

The leader among them said:

C1752. Kabir may mean the eldest. But in 12:78 above, Kabir is distinguished from Sheikh, and I have translated the one as "venerable" and the other as "aged".

In 20:71 Kabir obviously means "leader" or "chief", and has no reference to age.

I therefore translate here by the word "leader", that brother among them who took the most active part in these transactions. His name is not given in the Quran.

The eldest brother was Reuben. But according to the biblical story the brother who had taken the most active part in this transaction was Judah, one of the elder brothers, being the fourth son, after Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, and of the same mother as these. It was Judah who stood surety to Jacob for Benjamin (Gen. 43:9). It is therefore natural that Judah should, as here, offer to stay behind.

... أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُم مَّوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّهِ...

"Know ye not that your father did take an oath from you in Allah's name,

...وَمِن قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ ...

and how, before this, ye did fail in your duty with Joseph?

...فَلَنْ أَبْرَحَ الأَرْضَ حَتَّىَ يَأْذَنَ لِي أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللّهُ لِي...

Therefore will I not leave this land until my father permits me, or Allah commands me;

C1753. The pledge he had given was to his father, and in Allah's name. Therefore he was bound both to his father, and to Allah. He must await his father's orders and remain here as pledged, unless Allah opened out some other way. For example the Egyptian Wazir might relent; if so, he could go back with Benjamin to his father, and his pledge would be satisfied.

...وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٨٠)

and He is the best to command.

ارْجِعُواْ إِلَى أَبِيكُمْ فَقُولُواْ يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ...

81. "Turn ye back to your father, and say,

'O our father! Behold! thy son committed theft:

...وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلاَّ بِمَا عَلِمْنَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ (٨١)

we bear witness only to what we know,

and we could not well guard against the unseen!

C1754. 'He stole in secret and without our knowledge. How could we in the circumstances prevent it?

This may have been a good statement for the other nine brothers, but Judah was himself personally and specially pledged.

...وَاسْأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا...

82. "'Ask at the town where we have been and the caravan in which we returned,

...وَالْعِيْرَ الَّتِي أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ (٨٢)

and (you will find) we are indeed telling the truth.'"

C1755. To vouch for the truth of the story, the nine brothers are asked by Judah to appeal to their father to enquire at the place where they stayed and the caravan with which they came, and he would find that the facts were as they stated them. The nine brothers came back and told their father as they had been instructed by Judah.

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا ...

83. Jacob said: "Nay, but ye have yourselves contrived a story (good enough) for you.

C1756. Jacob was absolutely stunned by the story. He knew his darling little Benjamin too well to believe that he had committed theft. He flatly refused to believe it, and called it a cock-and-bull story, which indeed it was, though not in the sense in which he reproached the nine brothers.

With the eye of faith he saw clearly the innocence of Benjamin, though he did not see every detail of what had happened.

... فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ...

So patience is most fitting (for me).

...عَسَى اللهُ أَن يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا...

Maybe Allah will bring them (back) all to me (in the end):

C1757. With the eye of faith he clung to even a larger hope. Perhaps all three of his lost sons would come back, -Joseph, Benjamin, and Judah. His faith in Allah was unswerving, although alas! the present facts altogether unnerved him. (R).

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (٨٣)

for He is indeed full of knowledge and wisdom."

وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا أَسَفَى عَلَى يُوسُفَ...

84. And he turned away from them, and said: "How great is my grief for Joseph!"

...وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ (٨٤)

And his eyes became white with sorrow, and he fell into silent melancholy.

C1758. The old father's grief is indescribable. Yet with what master-strokes it is described here! One sorrow brings up the memory of another and a greater one.

'Benjamin is now gone! Oh but Joseph! his pretty dream of boyhood! his greatness foretold! and now how dark was the world! If he could but weep! Tears might give relief, and his red and swollen eyes might yet regain their light!'

But his grief was too deep for tears. His eyes lost their colour, and became a dull white. The light became a mere blur, a white glimmer. Darkness seemed to cover everything. So it was in the outside world. So was it in his mind. His grief was unshared, unexpressed, and uncomplaining.

Who could share it?

Who could understand it?

He bore his sorrow in silence. Yet his faith was undimmed, and he trimmed the lamp of patience, that sovereign virtue for those who have faith.

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتَأُ تَذْكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ

الْهَالِكِينَ (٨٥)

85. They said:

"By Allah! (never) wilt thou cease to remember Joseph until though reach the last extremity of illness, or until thou die!"

C1759. A speech full of jealousy, taunting malice, and lack of understanding, one that would have driven mad any one less endowed with patience and wisdom than was Jacob, the Prophet of Allah.

It shows that the sons were still unregenerate, though the time of their repentance and reclamation was drawing nigh. The cruel heartlessness of their words is particularly out of place, as Jacob bore his sorrow in silence and complained to no mortal, but poured out his distraction and grief only to Allah, as stated in the next verse.

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللّهِ ...

86. He said:

"I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allah

C1760. Jacob's plaint to Allah is about himself, not about Allah's doings. He bewails the distraction of his mind and his occasional breaking out of those bounds of patience which he had set for himself.

... وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨٦)

and I know from Allah that which ye know not...

C1761. He knew of Allah's merciful and beneficent dealings with man in a way his shallow sons did not. And his perfect faith in Allah also told him that all would be well. He never gave up hope for Joseph, as his directions in the next verse show.

They may be supposed to have been spoken after a little silence of grief and thought. That silence I have indicated in punctuation by three dots.

يَا بَنِيَّ ادْهَبُواْ فَتَحَسَّسُواْ مِن يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ...

87. "O my sons! go ye and enquire about Joseph and his brother,

...وَلاَ تَيْأَسُواْ مِن رَّوْحِ اللّهِ...

and never give up hope of Allah's Soothing Mercy:

C1762. The word is **rauh**, not ruh as some translators have mistakenly construed it.

Rauh includes the idea of a Mercy that stills or calms our distracted state, and is particularly appropriate here in the mouth of Jacob.

...إِنَّهُ لاَ يَيْأَسُ مِن رَّوْحِ اللّهِ إِلاَّ الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨٧)

truly no one despairs of Allah's Soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith."

C1763. Jacob ignores and forgives the sting and malice in the speech of his sons, and like a true Prophet of Allah, still wishes them well, gives them sound advice, and sends them on an errand which is to open their eyes to the wonderful ways of Providence as much as it will bring consolation to his own distressed soul.

He asks them to go again in search of Joseph and Benjamin. Perhaps by now he had an idea that they might be together in Egypt. In any case their stock of grain is again low, and they must seek its replenishment in Egypt. (R).

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ عَلَيْهِ قَالُواْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ...

88. Then, when they came (back) into (Joseph's) presence they said: "O exalted one!

C1764. The nine brothers come back to Egypt according to their father's direction.

Their first care is to see the Wazir. They must tell him of all their father's distress and excite his pity, if perchance he might release Benjamin. They would describe the father's special mental distress as well as the distress which was the common lot of all in famine time.

They had spent a great part of their capital and stock-in-trade. They would appeal to his charity. It might please so great a man, the absolute governor of a wealthy state. And they did so. Perhaps they mentioned their father's touching faith, and that brought Joseph out of his shell, as in the next verse.

...مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُّزْجَاةٍ ...

distress has seized us and our family; we have (now) brought but scanty capital:

...فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَآ...

So pay us full measure, (we pray thee), and treat it as charity to us:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ (٨٨)

for Allah doth reward the charitable."

قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُم مَّا فَعَلْتُم بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ (٨٩)

89. He said:

"Know ye how ye dealt with Joseph, and his brother, not knowing (what ye were doing)?"

C1765. Joseph now wants to reveal himself and touch their conscience. He had but to remind them of the true facts as to their treatment of their brother Joseph, whom they pretended to have lost.

He had by now also learnt from Benjamin what slights and injustice he too had suffered at their hands after Joseph's protection had been removed from him in their home.

Had not Joseph himself seen them but too prone to believe the worst of Benjamin and to say the worst of Joseph? But Joseph would be charitable, not only in the sense which they meant when they asked for a charitable grant of grain, but in a far higher sense. He would forgive them and put the most charitable construction on what they did, that they knew not what they were doing!

قَالُوا أَإِنَّكَ لَأَنتَ يُوسُفُ...

90. They said: "Art thou indeed, Joseph?"

C1766. Their father's words, the way events were shaping themselves. Joseph's questionings, perhaps Benjamin's manner now, not a slave kept in subjection but one in perfect love and understanding with this great Wazir, -perhaps also a recollection of Joseph's boyish dream,- all these things had prepared their minds and they ask the direct question, "Art thou Joseph?"

They get the direct reply, "Yes, I am Joseph; and if you have still any doubt of my identity, here is Benjamin: ask him. We have suffered much, but patience and right conduct are at last rewarded by Allah!"

...قَالَ أَنَاْ يُوسُفُ وَهَـٰذَا أَخِي...

He said:

"I am Joseph, and this is my brother:

...قَدْ مَنَّ اللّهُ عَلَيْنَا...

Allah has indeed been gracious to us (all):

...إِنَّهُ مَن يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٩٠)

behold, he that is righteous and patient -- never will Allah suffer the reward to be lost, of those who do right."

قَالُواْ تَاللّهِ لَقَدْ آثَرَكَ اللّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِن كُنَّا لَخَاطِئِينَ (٩١)

91. They said:

"By Allah! indeed has Allah preferred thee above us, and we certainly have been guilty of sin!"

C1767. The scales fall from the eyes of the brothers. We may suppose that they had joined Judah at this interview, and perhaps what Judah had seen when he was alone helped in the process of their enlightenment, They are convicted of sin out of their own mouths, and now there is no *arrier pensee*, no reserve thought, in their minds. They freely confess their wrong-doing, and the justice of Joseph's preferment.

قَالَ لاَ تَثْرِيبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ ...

92. He said: "This day let no reproach be (cast) on you:

C1768. Joseph is most generous. He is glad that they have at last seen the significance of what happened. But he will not allow them at this great moment of reconciliation to dwell on their conduct with reproaches against themselves.

There is more urgent work to do. An aged and beloved father is eating out his heart in far Canaan in love and longing for his Joseph, and he must be told all immediately, and "comforted in body, mind, and estate," and so he tells the brothers to hurry back immediately with his shirt as a sign of recognition, as a proof of these wonderful happenings.

... يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ...

Allah will forgive you,

...وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (٩٢)

and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy?

اذْهَبُواْ بِقَمِيصِي هَـذَا فَأَلْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا...

93. "Go with this my shirt, and cast it over the face of my father:
he will come to see (clearly).

C1769. It will be remembered that they had covered their crime by taking his shirt, putting on the stains of blood, and pretending that he had been killed by a wolf: see above, 12:17-18.

Now that they have confessed their crime and been forgiven, and they have joyful news to tell Jacob about Joseph. Joseph gives them another shirt of his to prove the truth of their story.

It is rich shirt, befitting a ruler of Egypt, to prove his good fortune, and yet perhaps in design and many colours (12:18, n. 1651) were reminiscent of the lost Joseph.

The first shirt plunged Jacob into grief. This one will now restore him. See the verses following.

...وَأْتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٩٣)

Then come ye (here) to me together with all your family."

C.113 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(12:94-111)

Jacob was comforted with the news,
The whole family moved to Egypt,
Were Joseph received them with honour.
He forgave his brothers, thanked and praised

Allah, and lived and died a righteous man.
So the story shows how the Plan of Allah
Doth work without fail: it defeats
The wiles of the wicked, turns evil to good,
And ever leads those who are true
To beatitudes undreamt of. So
Did it happen in Al Mustafa's life.
Will man not learn to rely on Allah
As the only Reality, turning away
From all that is fleeting or untrue?

Section 11

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ ...

94. When the caravan left (Egypt), their father said:

... إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ...

"I do indeed scent the presence of Joseph:

C1770. Literally, I feel the **scent**, or the air, or the atmosphere or the breath of Joseph; for **rih** has all these significations.

Or we might translate, 'I feel the presence of Joseph in the air'.

When a long-lost friend is about to be found or heard of, many people have a sort of presentiment of it, which they call telepathy. In Jacob's case it was more definite. He had always had faith that Joseph was living and that his dream would he realized. Now that faith was proved true by his own sons; they had been undutiful, and hard, and ignorant; and circumstances had converged to prove it to them by ocular demonstration.

Jacob's soul was more sensitive. No wonder he knew already before the news was actually brought to him.

...لَوْلاَ أَن تُفَنِّدُونِ (٩٤)

nay, think me not a dotard."

قَالُواْ تَاللّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلاَلِكَ الْقَدِيمِ (٩٥)

95. They said: "By Allah! truly thou art in thine old wandering mind."

C1771. "They" must be the people around him, before the brothers actually arrived.

These same brothers had sedulously cultivated the calumny that their father was an old dotard, and everybody around believed it, even after its authors had to give it up. Thus lies die hard, once they get a start.

فَلَمَّا أَن جَاء الْبَشِيرُ أَلْقَاهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ ...

96. Then when the bearer of the good news came, he cast (the shirt) over his face,

C1772. We may suppose this to have been Judah (see notes 1752 and 1753 above) who was pledged to his father for Benjamin, and who could now announce the good news not only of Benjamin but of Joseph.

We can imagine him hurrying forward, to be the first to tell the news, though the plural pronoun for those whom Jacob addresses in this verse, and for those who reply in the next verse, shows that all the brothers practically arrived together.

...فَارْتَدَّ ...

and he forthwith

C1773. The particle **fa** ("then") has here the force of "forthwith".

... بَصِيرًا...

regained clear sight.

C1774. Jacob's sight had grown dim; his eyes had become white with much sorrow for Joseph (see 12:84 above). Both his physical and mental vision now became clear and bright as before.

...قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٩٦)

He said: "Did I not say to you, 'Know from Allah that which ye know not?'"

C1775. He had said this (12:86) when everything was against him, and his sons were scoffers. Now they themselves have come to say that his faith was justified and his vision was true.

قَالُواْ يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ (٩٧)

97. They said: "O our father! ask for us forgiveness for our sins, for we were truly at fault."

قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي...

98. He said: "Soon will I ask my Lord for forgiveness for you:

C1776. He fully intended to do this, but the most injured party was Joseph, and it was only fair that Joseph should be consulted.

In fact Joseph had already forgiven his brothers all their past, and his father could confidently look forward to Joseph joining in the wish of the whole family to turn to Allah through their aged father Jacob in his prophetic office.

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٩٨)

for He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Merciful."

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُواْ عَلَى يُوسُفَ آوَى إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ...

99. Then when they entered the presence of Joseph, he provided a home for his parents with himself,

C1777. At length the whole family arrived in Egypt and were re-united with Joseph. They were all entertained and provided with homes. But the parents were treated with special honour, as was becoming both to Joseph's character and ordinary family ethics.

His mother Rachel had long been dead, but he had been brought up by his mother's sister Leah, whom his father

had also married. Leah was now his mother. They were lodged with Joseph himself.

...وَقَالَ ادْخُلُواْ مِصْرَ إِن شَاء اللّهُ آمِنِينَ (٩٩)

and said: "Enter ye Egypt (all) in safety if it please Allah."

C1778. This is in Arabic in the plural, not in the dual number. The welcome is for all to Egypt, and under the auspices of the Wazir or Egypt. They came, therefore, under Allah's will, to a double sense of security:

- Egypt was secure from the famine unlike the neighbouring countries;
- and they were to be cared for by the highest in the land.

... وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

100. And he raised his parents high on the throne (of dignity),

C1779. Certainly metaphorically: probably also literally. By Eastern custom the place of honour at a ceremonial reception is on a seat on a dais, with a special cushion of honour, such as is assigned to a bridegroom at his reception.

To show his high respect for his parents, Joseph made them sit on a throne of dignity. On the other hand, his parents and his brothers, -all performed the ceremony of prostration before Joseph in recognition of his supreme rank in Egypt under the Pharaoh. And thus was fulfilled the dream or vision of his youth (12:4 above and n. 1633).

... وَخَرُّواْ لَهُ سُجَّدًا...

and they fell down in prostration (all) before him.

C1779a. The ceremony of prostration for paying respect might have been allowed at the time of previous prophets, but with the advent of the complete and final revelation prostration before anyone other than Allah is a grave sin strictly prohibited. (Eds.).

...وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَـٰذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِن قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا...

He said:

"O my father! this is the fulfillment of my vision of old!

Allah hath made it come true!

...وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ...

He was indeed good to me when He took me out of prison

...وَجَاءَ بِكُم مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِن بَعْدِ أَن نَّزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ

...إِخْوَتِي...

and brought you (all here) out of the desert, (even) after Satan had sown enmity between me and my brothers.

C1780. Note how modest Joseph is throughout. The first things he thinks of among Allah's gracious favours to him are:

- that he was brought out of prison and publicly proclaimed to be honest and virtuous; and
- that his dear father was restored to him, as well as the brothers who had persecuted him all his life. He will say nothing against them personally. In his *husn-i-zann* (habit of interpreting everyone and everything in the most favourable and charitable light), he looks upon them as having been misled. It was Satan that set them against him. But now all is rectified by the grace of Allah, to Whom he renders due praise.

...إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ...

Verily my Lord understandeth best the mysteries of all that He planneth to do:

Latif. see n. 2844 to 22:63;

the fourth meaning mentioned there applies here, with echoes of the other meanings.

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٠٠)

for verily He is full of knowledge and wisdom.

رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِن تَأْوِيلِ الأَحَادِيثِ...

101. "O my Lord!

Thou hast indeed bestowed on me some power, and taught me something of the interpretation of dreams and events,

C1781. Then he turns to Allah in prayer, and again his modesty is predominant.

He held supreme power under the king, but he calls it "some power" or authority.

His reading of events and dreams had saved millions of lives in the great Egyptian famine; yet he refers to it as "something of the interpretation of dreams and events". And he takes no credit to himself, "All this," he says, "was Thy gift, 0 Allah! For such things can only come from the Creator of the heavens and earth."

...فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ أَنتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ...

O Thou Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my Protector in this world and in the Hereafter,

C1782. Power in the doing of things as well as power in intelligent forecasts and plans,-both must look to Allah: otherwise the deed and the plan would be futile.

...تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ (١٠١)

take thou my soul (at death) as one submitting to Thy Will (as a Muslim),

and unite me with the righteous."

C1783. Joseph's prayer may be analyzed thus:

1. I am nothing; all power and knowledge are Thine;
2. such things can only come from Thee, for Thou art the Creator of all;
3. none can protect me from danger and wrong, but only Thou;
4. Thy protection I need both in this world and the next;
5. may I till death remain constant to Thee-,

6. may I yield up my soul to Thee in cheerful submission to Thy will;
7. in this moment of union with my family after many partings let me think of the final union with the great family of the righteous.

How marvelously apt to the occasion!

ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ...

102. Such is one of the stories of what happened unseen, which We reveal by inspiration unto thee:

C1784. The story is finished.

But is it a story?

It is rather a recital of forces and motives, thoughts and feelings, complications and results, ordinarily not seen by men. However much they concert their plans and unite their forces, whatever dark plots they back with all their resources, -the plan of Allah works irresistibly, and sweeps away all their machinations.

The good win through in the end, but not always as they planned: the evil are foiled, and often their very plots help the good.

What did the brothers desire in trying to get rid of Joseph, and what actually happened?

How the Courtier's wife, encouraged by the corrupt women of her acquaintance, tried and failed to seduce Joseph and how Allah listened to his prayer and saved him from her vile designs?

How wrong was it of the cup-bearer to forget Joseph, and yet how his very forgetfulness kept Joseph safe and undisturbed in prison until the day came when he should tackle the great problems of Pharaoh's kingdom?

With every character in the story there are problems, and the whole is a beautifully balanced picture of the working of Allah's providence in man's chequered destiny. (R).

...وَمَا كُنتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ (١٠٢)

nor wast thou (present) with them when they concerted their plans together in the process of weaving their plots.

C1785. The holy Prophet was no actor in those scenes; yet by inspiration he was able to expound them in the divine light, as they had never been expounded before, whether in the Pentateuch or by any Seer before him. And allegorically they figured his own story, -how his own brethren sought to betray and kill him how by Allah's providence he was not only saved but he won through. (R).

وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠٣)

103. Yet no faith will the greater part of mankind have, however ardently thou dost desire it.

C1786. In spite of such an exposition and such a convincing illustration, how few men really have true faith, -such a faith as Jacob had in the old story, or Muhammad the Chosen One had, in the story which was actually unfolding itself on the world's stage when this Surah was revealed, shortly before the Hijrah?

Al-Mustafa's ardent wish and faith was to save his people and all mankind from the graceless condition of want of faith. But his efforts were flouted, and he had to leave his home and suffer all kinds of persecution, but like Joseph, and more than Joseph, he was marked out for great work, which he finally achieved.

وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

104. And no reward dost thou ask of them for this:

...إِنْ هُوَ إِلاَّ ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٤)

it is no less than a Message for all creatures.

C1787. The divine Message was priceless; it was not for the Messenger's personal profit, nor did he ask of men any reward for bringing it for their benefit. It was for all creatures,-literally, for all the worlds, as explained in 1:2, n. 20.

Section 12

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا...

105. And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by?

...وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُونَ (١٠٥)

Yet they turn (their faces) away from them!

C1788. Not only can we learn through Scripture of the working of Allah's providence in human history and the history of individual souls. His Signs are scattered literally throughout nature-throughout Creation-for all who have eyes to see. And yet man is so arrogant that he turns away his very eyes from them!

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّهِ إِلاَّ وَهُم مُّشْرِكُونَ (١٠٦)

106. And most of them believe not in Allah without associating (others as partners) with Him!

C1789. Even if people profess a nominal faith in Allah, they corrupt it by believing in other things as if they were Allah's partners, or had some share in the shaping of the world's destinies!

- In some circles, it is idolatry, the worship of stocks and stones.
- In others, it is Christolatry and Mariolatry, or the deification of heroes and men of renown.
- In others it is the powers of Nature or of Life, or of the human intellect personified in Science or Art or invention, and this is the more common form of modern idolatry.
- Others again worship mystery, or imaginary powers of good or even evil: greed and fear are mixed up with these forms of worship. Islam calls us to worship Allah, the One True God, and Him only. (R).

أَفَأَمِنُوا أَن تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ...

107. Do they then feel secure from the coming against them of the covering veil of the wrath of Allah --

C1790. Gtashiyat: covering veil, pall; used for the Judgment to come, which will be so dark and appalling as to hide up all other and petty things, and be the one great reality for the souls that were slaves to evil.

...أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ (١٠٧)

or of the coming against them of the (final) Hour all of a sudden while they perceive not?

C1791. The metaphor is changed, from intensity of darkness to suddenness of time. It will come before they are aware of it. Let them not feel any sense of safety in sin.

قُلْ هَـذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَاْ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي...

108. Say thou:

"This is my way: I do invite unto Allah -- on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes -- I and whoever follows me:

C1792. Islam holds fast to the one central fact in the spiritual world,

- the unity of God, and
- all Reality springing from Him and Him alone.

There can be no one and nothing in competition with that one and only Reality. It is the essence of Truth. All other ideas or existences, including our perception of Self, are merely relative, mere projections from the wonderful faculties which He has given to us.

This is not, to us, mere hypothesis. It is in our inmost experience. In the physical world, they say that seeing is believing. In our inner world this sense of Allah is as clear as sight in the physical world. Therefore, Al-Mustafa and those who really follow him in the truest sense of the world, call all the world to see this Truth, feel this experience, follow this Way.

They will never be distracted by metaphysical speculations, whose validity will always be doubtful, nor be deluded with phantoms which lead men astray.

...وَسُبْحَانَ اللّهِ وَمَا أَنَاْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٠٨)

Glory to Allah!

and never will I join gods with Allah!"

...وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ إِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِي إِلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى

109. Nor did We send before thee (as Messengers) any but men, whom We did inspire -- (men) living in human habitations.

C1793. It was men that Allah sent as His Messengers to explain Him to men. He did not send angels or gods. Into His chosen men He breathed His inspiration, so that they could see truer than other men. But they were men living with men, in men's habitations in town or country; not recluses or cenobites, who had no personal experience of men's affairs and could not be teachers of men in the fullest sense. Their deeds tell their own tale.

...أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُواْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن

...قَبْلِهِمْ

Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them?

...وَلَدَارُ الآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ اتَّقَواْ ...

But the home of the Hereafter is best, for those who do right.

C1794. The righteous, the men of Allah, had, as in Joseph's history, some evidence of Allah's providence in this very world with all its imperfections as reflecting our imperfections. But this world is of no real consequence to them. Their home is in the Hereafter.

Joseph's earthly home was in Canaan; but he attained his glory elsewhere; and his spiritual Home is in the great Society of the Righteous (3:39).

...أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٠٩)

Will ye not then understand?

...حَتَّى إِذَا اسْتَيْأَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّواْ أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُواْ

110. (Respite will be granted) until, when the apostles give up hope (of their people) and (come to) think that they were treated as liars,

C1795. Zannu (come to think):

I construe the nominative of this verb to be "the messengers" in agreement with the best authorities.

Kuzibu is the usual reading, though Kuzzibu, the alternative reading, also rests on good authority.

I construe the meaning to be: that Allah gives plenty of rope to the wicked (as in Joseph's story) until His own Messengers feel almost that it will be hopeless to preach to them and come to consider themselves branded as liars by an unbelieving world; that the breaking point is then reached: that Allah's help then comes swiftly to His men, and they are delivered from persecution and danger, while the wrath of Allah overtakes sinners, and nothing can then ward it off. This interpretation has good authority behind it, though there are differences of opinion.

...جَاءهُمْ نَصْرُنَا فَنُجِّيَ مَن نَّشَاء...

there reaches them Our help. And those whom We will are delivered into safety.

...وَلاَ يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (١١٠)

But never will be warded off Our punishment from those who are in sin.

...لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُوْلِي الأَلْبَابِ

111. There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding.

C1796. Their stories, i.e., the stories of Prophets or of the wicked; for the two threads inter-twine, as in Joseph's story.

...مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَـٰكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ...

It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it - -

C1797. A story like that of Joseph is not a purely imaginary fable. The People of the Book have it in their sacred literature. It is confirmed here in its main outline, but here there is a detailed spiritual exposition that will be found nowhere in earlier literature.

The exposition covers all sides of human life. If properly understood it gives valuable lessons to guide our conduct,-an instance of Allah's grace and mercy to people who will go to Him in faith and put their affairs in His hands.

...وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١١١)

a detailed exposition of all things, and a Guide and a Mercy to any such as believe.

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ

He knoweth the Unseen and that which is open: He is the Great, the Most High.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ra'd

الرَّعْدِ

Introduction and Summary

The chronological place of this Surah and general argument of Surahs 10 to 15 has been described in the Introduction to Surah 10.

The special argument of this Surah deals with that aspect of Allah's revelation of Himself to man and His dealings with him, which is concerned with certain contrasts which are here pointed out.

There is the revelation of the Prophets, which comes in spoken words adapted to the language of the various men and groups of men to whom it comes; and there is the parallel revelation or

Signs in the constant laws of external nature, on this earth and in the visible heavens.

There is the contrast between recurring life and death already in the external world;

why should men disbelieve in the life after death?

They mock at the idea of punishment because it is deferred; but can they not see Allah's power and glory in thunder and the forces of nature?

All creation praises Him; it is the good that endures and the evil that is swept away like froth or scum. Not only in miracles but in the normal working of the world, are shown Allah's power and mercy. What is Punishment in this world, compared to that in the life to come? Even here there are Signs of working of his law; plot or plan as men will, it is Allah's Will that must prevail. This is illustrated in Joseph's story in the preceding Surah.

Summary- The Book of Revelation in true, and is confirmed by the Signs to be seen in visible nature. Allah Who created much mighty forces in outer nature can raise up man again after death. Allah's knowledge is all-encompassing; so are His power and goodness (13:1-18, C. 114).

The righteous seek the pleasure of Allah and find Peace; the evil ones break His Law, cavil and dispute, and reject faith; the wrath of Allah will take them unawares, but in His Own good time (13:19-31, C. 115).

So was it with Prophets before; they were mocked, but the mockers were destroyed, while the righteous rejoiced and were established (13:32-43, C. 116).

C.114 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(13:1-18)

Allah's Truth comes to man in revelation
And in nature. How noble are His works!
How sublime His government of the world!
They all declare forth His glory!
Yet man must strangely resist Faith,

And ask to see the Signs of His power
Rather than the Signs of His Mercy!
Doth not His knowledge search through
The most hidden things? Are not
Lightning and Thunder the Signs of His Might
As well as of His Mercy? He alone
Is Worthy of praise, and His Truth
Will stand when all vanities pass
Away like scum on the torrent of Time.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الر...

1. Alif Lam Mim Ra.

C1798. For Alif, Lam, Mim, see n. 25 to 2:1.

For Alif, Lam, Ra, see Introduction to Surah 10. For abbreviated Letters generally see Appendix 1.

Here there seems to be a combination of the groups Alif, Lam, Mim and Alif, Lam, Ra. We consider here not only the beginning (Alif), the middle (Lam), and the end (Mim), of man's spiritual history, but also the immediate future of the interior of our organization, such as it appeared to our Ummah towards the close of the Makkan period. But in trying to determine their meaning, we must not be dogmatic. The befitting attitude is to say: Allah knows best. (R).

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ...

These are the Signs (or Verses) of the Book:

C1799. Cf. 10:1, n. 1382.

وَالَّذِيَ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ...

that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord is the Truth;

...وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (١)

but most men believe not.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا...

2. Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that ye can see;

C1800. Should we construe the clause "that ye can see" to refer to "pillars" or "to the heavens"?

Either is admissible, but I prefer the former.

The heavens are supported on no pillars that we can see. What we see is the blue vault of heaven, but there are invisible forces or conditions created by Allah, which should impress us with His power and glory.

...ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ...

is firmly established on the Throne (of Authority);

C1801. Cf. 10:3 , and n. 1386.

We must not think that anything came into being by itself or carries out its functions by itself. Allah is the Creator from Whom everything has its life and being and through Whom everything is maintained and supported, even though fixed laws are established for its regulation and government.

... وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law)!

...كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

each one runs (its course) for a term appointed.

The **"term appointed"** limits the duration of their functioning: its ultimate return is to Allah, as its beginning proceeded from Allah.

...يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ...

He doth regulate affairs,

C1802. Cf. 10:31, n. 1425.

Where the laws of nature are fixed, and everything runs according to its appointed course, the government and regulation behind it is still that of Allah.

Where there is limited free will as in man, yet the ultimate source of man's faculties is Allah.

Allah cares for His creatures. He does not, as in the idea of polytheistic Greece, sit apart on Olympus, careless of His creatures.

... يُفَصِّلُ الآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُم بِلِقَاء رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ (٢)

explaining the Signs in detail, that ye may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord.

C1803. One manifestation of His caring for His creatures, even where a limited amount of free-will is granted for their development, is that He is careful to explain His Signs both in nature and in express and detailed revelation through His Messengers, lest man should have any doubts whether he has to return ultimately to his Lord and account for all his actions during the "term appointed," when he was given some initiative by way of trial and preparation.

If man attends carefully to the Signs, he should have no doubt whatever.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا...

3. And it is He Who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and (flowing) rivers:

...وَمِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ...

and fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two:

C1804. I think that this refers to sex in plants, and I see M Pickthalls has translated accordingly.

Plants like animals have their reproductive apparatus, - male stamens and female pistils. In most cases the same flower combines both stamens and pistils, but in some cases these organs are specialized in separate flowers, and in some cases, even in separate trees. The date-palm of Arabia and the Papaya of India, are instances of fruit trees which are unisexual.

...يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ...

He draweth the Night as a veil o'er the Day.

C1805. Cf. 7:54 and n. 1032. The whole passage there may be compared with the whole passage here.

Both their similarity and their variation show how closely reasoned each argument is, with expressions exactly appropriate to each occasion.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٣)

Behold, verily in these things there are Signs for those who consider!

...وَفِي الأَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُّتَجَاوِرَاتٌ

4. And in the earth are tracts (diverse though) neighboring,

وَجَنَّاتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفَضِّلُ...

and gardens of vines and fields sown with corn, and palm trees -- growing out of single roots or otherwise: watered with the same water,

C1806. Does "growing out of single roots or otherwise" qualify "palm trees" or "vines" and "corn" as well?

The former construction is adopted by the classical Commentators: in which case the reference is to the fact either;

- that two or more palm trees occasionally grow out of a single root, or
- that palm trees grow sometimes as odd trees and sometimes in great thick clusters.

If the latter construction is adopted, the reference would be to the fact that date-palm (and palms generally) and some other plants arise out of a single tap-root, while the majority of trees arise out of a net-work of roots that spread out extensively.

Here is adaptation to soil and water conditions,-another Sign or wonder of Creation.

...بَعْضَهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الأُكُلِ...

yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat.

C1807. The date-palm, the crops of food-grains, and the grape-vine are all fed by the same kind of water, yet how different the harvests which they yield! And that applies to all vegetation.

The fruit or eatable produce may vary in shape, size, colour, flavour, etc., in endless variety.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٤)

Behold, verily in these things there are Signs for those who understand!

وَإِن تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ أَئِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا أَئِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ...

5. If thou dost marvel (at their want of faith), strange is their saying:

"When we are (actually) dust, shall we indeed then be in a creation renewed?"

C1808. After seeing the Signs in nature and the Signs in revelation, it is indeed strange that people should deny their Creator.

But if they admit the Signs of the Creator, Who works marvels before their very eyes every day, why should they doubt that when they are reduced to dust, they can be raised up again?

If one creation is possible, what difficulty can there be in accepting a renewed creation?

It becomes then a question of an obstinate and rebellious will, for which the punishment is described.

...أُولَـٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ...

They are those who deny their Lord!

...وَأُولَـٰئِكَ الأَغْلاَلُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ...

They are those round whose necks will be yokes (of servitude):

C1809. Aglal: yokes (of servitude): Cf. 7:157 and n. 1128.

The punishment may be conceived of in two stages:

- immediately, yokes of servitude to superstition, falsehood, etc., as against the freedom in Faith;
- and finally, the Fire which bums the very soul.

...وَأُوْلَـئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدونَ (٥)

they will be Companions of the Fire, who dwell therein (for aye)!

...وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثُلاَتُ

6. They ask thee to hasten on the evil in preference to the good: yet have come to pass, before them, (many) exemplary punishments!

C1810. The Unbelievers by way of a taunt say: "If there is a punishment, let us see it come down now."

The answer to it is threefold.

1. Why do you want to see the punishment rather than the mercy of Allah?

   Which is better?

2. Have you not heard in history of terrible punishments for evil?

   And have you not before your very eyes seen examples of wickedness brought to book?

3. Allah works not only in justice and punishment, but also in mercy and forgiveness, and mercy and forgiveness come first.

...وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلَى ظُلْمِهِمْ...

But verily thy Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrongdoing:

...وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٦)

and verily thy Lord is (also) strict in punishment.

...وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلاَ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ...

7. And the Unbelievers say!

"Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord?"

C1811. After all the Signs that have just been mentioned it is mere fractiousness to say, "Bring down a Sign."

Al-Mustafa brought Signs and credentials as other Prophets did, and like them, refused to satisfy mere idle curiosity.

إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ (٧)...

But thou art truly a warner and to every people a guide.

C1812. The last sentence of this verse has usually been interpreted to mean that the Prophet's function was merely to warn, and that guidance was sent by Allah to every nation through its Prophets.

I think the following interpretation is equally possible:

'it is itself a Sign that Al-Mustafa should warn and preach and produce the Quran, and the guidance which he brings is universal guidance, as from Allah.'

Section 2

اللّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنثَى وَمَا تَغِيضُ الأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ...

8. Allah doth know what every female (womb) doth bear, by how much the wombs fall short (of their time or number) or do exceed.

C1813. The female womb is just an example, a type, of extreme secrecy. Not even the female herself knows what is in the womb,-whether it is a male young or a female young, whether it is one or more, whether it is to be born short of the standard time or to exceed the standard time.

But the most hidden and apparently unknowable things are clear to Allah's knowledge: there is no mere chance; all things are regulated by Allah in just measure and proportion.

The general proposition comes in the last sentence: "every single thing is with Him in (due) proportion."

...وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِندَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ (٨)

Every single thing is before His sight, in (due) proportion.

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ (٩)

9. He knoweth the Unseen and that which is open:
He is the Great, the Most High.

C1814. A verse of matchless rhythm in Arabic.

سَوَاء مِّنكُم مَّنْ أَسَرَّ الْقَوْلَ وَمَن جَهَرَ بِهِ...

10. It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly;

...وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِاللَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ (١٠)

whether he lie hid by night or walk freely by day.

C1815. Our most hidden thoughts and motives are known to Him at all times.

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللّهِ...

11. For each (such person) there are (angels) in succession, before and behind him:
they guard him by command of Allah.

C1816. See last verse.

Every person, whether he conceals or reveals his thoughts, whether he skulks in darkness or goes about by day, -all are under Allah's watch and ward. His grace encompasses everyone, and again and again protects him, if he will only take the protection, from harm and evil.

If in his folly he thinks he can secretly take some pleasure or profit, he is wrong, for recording angels record all his thoughts and deeds.

...إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُواْ مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ...

Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls).

C1817. Allah is not intent on punishment. He created man virtuous and pure; he gave him intelligence and knowledge; he surrounded him with all sorts of instruments of His grace and mercy.

If, in spite of all this, man distorts his own will and goes against Allah's Will, yet is Allah's forgiveness open to him if he will take it.

It is only when he has made his own sight blind and changed his own nature or soul away from the beautiful mould in which Allah formed it, that Allah's Wrath will descend on him and the favourable position in which Allah placed him will be changed.

When once the punishment comes, there is no turning it back. None of the things which he relied upon- other than Allah-can possibly protect him.

...وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلاَ مَرَدَّ لَهُ...

But when (once) Allah willeth a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back,

...وَمَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِ مِن وَالٍ (١١)

nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect.

... هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ...

12. It is He Who doth show you the lightning, by way both of fear and of hope:

C1818. Here then is the climax to the answer of the sarcastic challenge of the Unbelievers for punishment, in language of great sublimity.

- Why look to evil rather than to good?
- to punishment rather than to mercy?
- to the fear in the force and fire of the lightning rather than to the hope of good and abundant crops in the rain which will come behind the lightning clouds?

... وَيُنْشِىءُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ (١٢)

it is He Who doth raise up the clouds, heavy with (fertilizing) rain!

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ ...

13. Nay,

thunder repeateth His praises,

C1819. Nay, thunder itself, which may frighten you, is but a tame and beneficent force before Him, declaring His praises, like the rest of creation.

THUNDER thus aptly gives the name to this Surah of contrasts, where what we may think terrible is shown to be really a submissive instrument of good in Allah's hands.

... وَالْمَلاَئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ...

and so do the angels, with awe:

C1820. And the angels, whom we think to be beautiful creatures of power and glory nearest to Allah, yet feel reverence and awe even as they praise His Holy Name.

...وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيبُ بِهَا مَن يَشَاء وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي اللّهِ...

He flingeth the loud-voiced thunderbolts, and therewith He striketh whomsoever He will... Yet these (are the men) who (dare to) dispute about Allah,

...وَهُوَ شَدِيدُ الْمِحَالِ (١٣)

with the strength of His power (supreme)!

C1821. Who is puny man, to call Allah in question?

Cf. some variations on this theme in the Book of Job, e.g. chapters 38 to 41.

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ...

14. For Him (alone) is prayer in Truth:

C1822. Haq: truth; right; what is due, befitting, proper.

All these meanings are to be understood here.

If we worship anything other than Allah (whether it is idols, stars, powers of nature, spirits, or deified men, or

Self, or Power, or Wealth, Science or Art, Talent or Intellect), our worship is both foolish and futile.

...وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ لاَ يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُم بِشَيْءٍ...

any others that they call upon besides Him hear them no more than

...إِلاَّ كَبَاسِطِ كَفَّيْهِ إِلَى الْمَاء لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ...

if they were to stretch forth their hands for water to reach their mouth but it reaches them not:

...وَمَا دُعَاء الْكَافِرِينَ إِلاَّ فِي ضَلاَلٍ (١٤)

for the prayer of those without Faith is nothing but (futile) wandering (in the mind).

C1823. Without Faith, it is obvious that prayer or worship has no meaning whatever. It is but an aberration of the mind. But there is a deeper meaning.

You may have false faith, as in superstitions or in worshipping things other than Allah, as explained in the last note. In that case, too, you are pursuing mere phantoms of the mind. When you come to examine it, it is mere imbecility or futility.

Worship and prayer are justified only to Allah, the One True God. (R).

وَلِلّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ ...

15. Whatever beings there are in the heavens and the earth do prostrate themselves to Allah (acknowledging subjection)

C1824. Notice that the original of what I have translated "whatever being" is the personal pronoun *man*, not *ma*.

This then refers to beings with a personality, e.g., angels, spirits, human beings, and possibly other things of objective (not necessarily material) existence, as contrasted with their Shadows or Simulacra or Appearances, or Phantasms, mentioned at the end of the verse.

Both these Beings and their Shadows are subject to the Will of Allah.

See notes 1825 and 1827.

C1825. "Prostrate themselves": the posture means that they recognise their subjection to Allah's Will and Law, whether they wish it or not.

...طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا...

-- with good will or in spite of themselves:

C1826. "In spite of themselves": Satan and Evil.

They would like to get away from the control of the All-good Allah, but they cannot, and they have to acknowledge His supremacy and lordship over them.

...وَظِلالُهُم بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالآصَالِ (١٥)

so do their shadows in the mornings and evenings.

C1827. Even the Shadows -creations of the Imagination, or projections from other things and dependent on the other things for their existence, as shadows are to substance- even such shadows are subject to Allah's Laws and Will, and cannot arise or have any effect on our minds except by His permission.

The Shadows are longest and therefore most prominent when the sun is level, and tend to disappear as the sun approaches the zenith. But even when they are longest and most prominent, they are still subject to Allah's Will and Law. (R).

...قُلْ مَن رَّبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

16. Say: "Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth?"

C1828. The meaning of **"Rabb"** is explained in n. 20, to 1:2.

...قُلِ اللّهُ...

Say: "It is Allah."

...قُلْ أَفَاتَّخَذْتُم مِّن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاء لاَ يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلاَ ضَرًّا...

Say: "Do ye then take (for worship) protectors other than Him, such as have no power either for good or for harm to themselves?"

C1829. Cf. 5:76.

...قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ...

Say:

"Are the blind equal with those who see?

...أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ وَالنُّورُ...

Or the depths of darkness equal with Light?"

...أَمْ جَعَلُواْ لِلّهِ شُرَكَاء خَلَقُواْ كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ...

Or do they assign to Allah partners who have created (anything) as He has created, so that the creation seemed to them similar?

C1830. This verse may be analyzed into six parts, each two parts going together like question and answer. Each except the fifth part is introduced by the word "Say", which is equivalent in old Arabic to inverted commas.

The fifth part, "or do they assign .... similar?" is not introduced by "Say", because it is in the indirect form.

- Who is the Lord and Sustainer of the Worlds?

  It is Allah,

- And yet you worship other gods?

  No, no one can be equal to Him, any more than darkness is equal to light.

- Your other gods have created nothing by which you can be misled?

  No indeed; He is the only Creator, the One and Supreme.

...قُلِ اللّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (١٦)

Say: "Allah is the Creator of all things:

He is the One, the Supreme and Irresistible."

أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا...

17. He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure:

C1831. This verse is full of parables.

1. It is Allah Who sends rain and sends it to all.

   See how it flows in different channels according to their capacities. Some are sluggish-, some have a swift current. Some form great rivers and irrigate wide tracts of country; some are clear crystal streams, perhaps in hilly tracts, with beds of clean pebbles which you can see through the water.

   Some produce delicious edible fish; and some are infested by crocodiles or injurious monsters.

   And there are degrees and degrees among brooks, streams, lakes, rivers, and seas.

   So with the rain of Allah's mercy and the knowledge and wisdom and guidance which He sends. All can receive it. Different ones will respond according to their capacities.

2. In the physical world, water is pure and beneficial. But froth and scum will gather according to local conditions.

   As the floods will carry off the scum and purify the water, so will the flood of Allah's spiritual mercy carry away our spiritual scum and purify the water.

3. The froth may make a greater show on the surface, but it will not last. So will there be frothy knowledge, which will disappear, but Allah's Truth will endure.

...فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَّابِيًا...

but the torrent bears away the foam that mounts up to the surface.

...وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاء حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِّثْلُهُ...

Even so, from that (ore) which they heat in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is a scum likewise.

C1832. In continuation of the last note, the fourth parable is that of metal ores:

- the ore is full of baser admixture, but the fire will separate the gold from the dross for ornaments, or
- some metal of household utility, with which you make every-day utensils, which the fire will separate from admixtures which you do not want.

So the fire of Allah's test, either by adversity or by affluence, will search out the true metal in us and reject the dross. it will show us what is valuable or what is useful, all sorts of scum and vanity which we collect and miscall knowledge.

...كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ...

Thus doth Allah (by parables) show forth Truth and Vanity:

...فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

for the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth.

...كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ (١٧)

Thus doth Allah set forth parables.

لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنَىٰ...

18. For those who respond to their Lord, are (all) good things.

...وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا...

But those who respond not to Him -- even if they had all that is in the heavens and on earth,

...وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْحِسَابِ وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ...

and as much more, (in vain) would they offer it for ransom.

C1833. Cf. 3:91 and 10:54.

...وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (١٨)

what a bed of misery!

C.115 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:19-31)

The seeing and the blind are not alike;
Nor are those blessed with Faith and those without.
The former seek Allah, and attain
Peace and blessedness in their hearts,
And a final Home of rest; the latter
Are in a state of Curse, and their End
Is terrible. If Allah in His wisdom
Postpones retribution, it is for a time.
His promise never fails; it will come
To pass in His own good time.
In all things it is for Him to command

Section 3

أَفَمَن يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَى...

19. Is then one who doth know that that which hath been revealed unto these from thy Lord is the Truth, like one who is blind?

C1834. In this section the contrast between Faith and Righteousness on the one hand and Infidelity and Evil on the other is set out.

The righteous man is known as one who;

- receives admonition;
- is true to his covenants;
- follows the universal Religion of Faith and Practice joined together;
- is patient and persevering in seeking Allah;

and in practical matters he is known to be;

- regular in prayer;
- generous in true charity, whether open or secret; and

- not revengeful, but anxious to turn off evil with good, thus breaking the chain of evil which tends to perpetuate itself.

...إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُوْلُواْ الأَلْبَابِ (١٩)

It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition --

الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللّهِ وَلاَ ينقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ (٢٠)

20. Those who fulfil the Covenant of Allah and fail not in their plighted word;

وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ...

21. Those who join together those things which Allah hath commanded to be joined,

C1835. That is,

- join faith with practice,
- love of God with love of man, and
- respect for all Prophets alike, i.e., follow the right Religion, and not odd bits of it.

...وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الحِسَابِ (٢١)

hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning;

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُواْ ابْتِغَاء وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ...

22. Those who patiently persevere, seeking the countenance their Lord;

...وَأَقَامُواْ الصَّلاَةَ وَأَنفَقُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلاَنِيَةً...

establish regular prayers;

spend, out of (the gifts) We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly;

...وَيَدْرَؤُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ...

and turn off Evil with good:

...أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ (٢٢)

for such there is the final attainment of the (Eternal) Home --

C1836. Their journey in this life was at best a sojourn. The Heaven is their eternal Home, which is further prefigured in the two following verses.

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ...

23. Gardens of perpetual bliss:

they shall enter there, as well as the righteous among their fathers, their spouses, and their offspring:

C1837. The relationships of this life are temporal, but love in righteousness is eternal.

In the eternal Gardens of Bliss the righteous will be reunited with all those near and dear ones whom they loved, provided only that they were righteous also; for in eternity nothing else counts.

Blood-relationships and marriage relationships create certain physical bonds in this life, which may lead to much good, and possibly also to evil. All that is physical or evil will go. But the good will come forth with a new meaning in the final Reckoning. Thus ancestors and descendants, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, (for dhurriyat includes them), whose love was pure and sanctified, will find new bliss in the perfecting of their love and will see a new and mystic meaning in the old and ephemeral bonds.

Can we wonder at Jacob's reunion with Joseph, or that of Can we wonder at Jacob's reunion with Joseph, or that of Moses with Aaron, or Muhammad Al Mustafa with the Lady Khadija?

In fact all the Righteous will be reunited in the Hereafter (12:101).

وَالمَلاَئِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِم مِّن كُلِّ بَابٍ (٢٣)...

and angels shall enter unto them from every gate (with the salutation):

سَلاَمٌ عَلَيْكُم بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ (٢٤)

24. "Peace unto you for that ye persevered in patience!

Now how excellent is the final Home!"

وَالَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ...

25. But those who break the Covenant of Allah, after having plighted their word thereto

...وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَآ أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ...

and cut asunder those things which Allah has commanded to be joined,

and work mischief in the land --

C1838. This is the opposite of the things explained in 13:21 above, n. 1835.

...أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ (٢٥)

on them is the Curse;

for them is the terrible Home!

C1839. This is in contrast to the state of the blessed, described in 13:22-24 above,

The Curse is the opposite of the Bliss, and the Terrible Home is the opposite of the Eternal Home, the Gardens of perpetual bliss.

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ...

26. Allah doth enlarge, or grant by (strict) measure the Sustenance (which He giveth) to whom so He pleaseth.

C1840. Allah, the Sustainer and Cherisher of all His creatures, gives sustenance to all.

To some He grants it in abundance; to others He gives it in strict measure. No one can question Him, for His Will is supreme, and it is the measure of all good.

...وَفَرِحُواْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

(The worldly) rejoice in the life of this world:

...وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الآخِرَةِ إِلاَّ مَتَاعٌ (٢٦)

but the life of this world is but little comfort in the Hereafter.

C1841. Cf. 9:38.

The meaning here may also be:

This present life is just a furniture, a convenience, a stepping stone, a probation, for the life to come. In itself it is less important than the Hereafter.

Section 4

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوْلاَ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ...

27. The Unbelievers say: "Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord?"

C1842. The question is repeated from 13:7 above;

for the line of reasoning there suggested in answer is now completed, and another line of reasoning is now taken up.

Allah provides every guidance for those who turn to Him in penitence, but He will leave those to wander astray who deliberately close their eyes and their hearts to His grace and the comfort that comes from remembering Him and celebrating His praises.

...قُلْ إِنَّ اللّهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أَنَابَ (٢٧)

Say: "Truly Allah leaveth, to stray, whom He will;

but He guideth to Himself those who turn to Him in penitence --

الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُم بِذِكْرِ اللّهِ...

28. "Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah:

...أَلاَ بِذِكْرِ اللّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ (٢٨)

for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.

C1843. The Sign or Miracle is not something external: it is something internal, something in your mind, heart, and soul. It depends on your inner spiritual experience. If you turn to Allah, that light, that experience, will come. If you do not, Allah will not force you.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَى لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَآبٍ (٢٩)

29. "For those who believe and work righteousness, is (every) blessedness, and a beautiful place of (final) return."

C1844. "Blessedness": Tuba: an internal state of satisfaction, an inward joy which is difficult to describe in words, but which reflects itself in the life of the good man, through good and ill fortune, through good report and evil. And then, there is always the final goal to which his eyes are turned, the beautiful Home of rest in the Hereafter, after this life's struggles are over.

That goal is Allah Himself.

كَذَلِكَ أَرْسَلْنَاكَ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ...

30. Thus have We sent thee amongst a People before whom (long since) have (other) Peoples (gone and) passed away;

C1845. Our Prophet came later in time than other Prophets, to complete their Message and universalize Religion. And certainly it is after his age that the process of the unification of the world began. That process is not complete yet, but is proceeding apace.

...لِّتَتْلُوَ عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِيَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَـنِ...

in order that thou mightest rehearse unto them what We send down unto thee by inspiration;

yet do they reject (Him), the Most Gracious!

...قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لا إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ...

Say:

"He is my Lord!

There is no god but He!

...عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ (٣٠)

On Him is my trust,

and to Him do I turn!"

C1846. Faith tells us that no amount of opposition from Unbelievers can ever stop Allah's Plan.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ قُرْآنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ أَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الأَرْضُ...

31. If there were a Qur'án with which mountains were moved,
or the earth were cloven asunder,

...أَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتَى...

or the dead were made to speak, (this would be the one!)

...بَل لِّلّهِ الأَمْرُ جَمِيعًا...

But, truly, the Command is with Allah in things!

C1847. Everything is possible and in Allah's power. His Plan is beneficent and all-embracing. But it is not for His creatures to dictate to Him, or demand what He should do, or how He should do it.

The Command is with Allah in all things. The Believers know His omnipotence, and they also know that He will order His world for the best.

...أَفَلَمْ يَيْأَسِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَن لَّوْ يَشَاء اللّهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا...

Do not the Believers know, that, had Allah (so) willed, He could have guided all mankind (to the Right)?

...وَلاَ يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ تُصِيبُهُم بِمَا صَنَعُواْ قَارِعَةٌ...

But the Unbelievers -- never will disaster cease to seize them for their (ill) deeds,

...أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّن دَارِهِمْ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللّهِ...

or to settle close to their homes, until the Promise of Allah come to pass,

...إِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (٣١)...

for, verily, Allah will not fail in His promise.

C1848. Let not the Unbelievers think that if they seem to prosper for a time, that is the end of the matter. They are warned about three things.

1. Their ill deeds must carry evil consequences for them all the time, though they may not perceive them for a certain time.

2. Their homes, their places of resort, the circles in which they move, will also be haunted by their ill deeds and their consequences. For evil makes a complex of its environment. The walls of Jericho, when they fall, must bring down all Jericho in its ruins.
3. The ultimate Disaster, the final Reckoning, must come, for Allah never fails in His promise. True values must eventually be restored: the good to the good, and the evil to the evil.

   The Commentators draw illustrations from the life of the Prophet, his exile from Makkah, and his restoration. A similar miracle works in all history. But the Command is with Allah.

C.116 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:32-43)

The mockery of Allah's Messengers is an old game
Of the world. But Allah's Truth will come
To its own in good time. The End
Of the righteous is their Home of Bliss,
And they rejoice in the revelations
They receive. The Messengers of Allah
Take their due share in the life
Of the world; they win through by Allah's grace
Against all the plots of the world.
Their witness is from Allah, through His revelation.

Section 5

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِىءَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ...

32. Mocked were (many) Messengers before thee:

C1849. Cf. 6:10.

...فَأَمْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ...

but I granted respite to the Unbelievers, and finally I punished them;

...فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ (٣٢)

then how (terrible) was My requital!

C1850. The punishment was in many cases deferred. But when it did come, how terrible and exemplary it was!

...أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَآئِمٌ عَلَى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ...

33. Is then He Who standeth over every soul (and knoweth) all that it doth, (like any others)?

...وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاء قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ...

And yet they ascribe partners to Allah. Say: "But name them!

C1851. Cf. 12:40.

'You have but to name your false gods, and you will see that they are nothing but names. There is no reality behind them, whereas Allah is the One great Reality. He penetrates everything through and through and knows all things.

Do you dare to tell aim of something on earth that He does not know?

Or is it just a trick or a show of words?

...أَمْ تُنَبِّئُونَهُ بِمَا لاَ يَعْلَمُ فِي الأَرْضِ أم بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ...

Is it that ye will inform Him of something He knoweth not on earth, or is it (just) a show of words?"

...بَلْ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوا عَنِ السَّبِيلِ...

Nay! to those who believe not, their pretence seems pleasing, but they are kept back (thereby) from the Path:

C1852. All pretences and fancies seem attractive to their inventors, but alas! they are a great obstruction to the Path of Religion and Truth.

However, if by their contumacy, they have cut themselves off from Allah's grace, who can guide them or reclaim them from their errors?

...وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٣٣)

and those whom Allah leaves to stray, no one can guide.

...لَّهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الآخِرَةِ أَشَقُّ

34. For them is a Penalty in the life of this world, but harder, truly, is the Penalty of the Hereafter;

C1853. The consequences of sin may be felt in this life itself, but they are nothing compared to the final penalties in the life to come.

...وَمَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللّهِ مِن وَاقٍ (٣٤)

and defender have they none against Allah.

...مَّثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ

35. The parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised! --

...تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ...

beneath if flow rivers:

...أُكُلُهَا دَآئِمٌ ...

perpetual is the enjoyment thereof

C1854. For the comprehensive meaning of the root akala (literally "to cat"), see 5:66, n. 776.

In its derived meaning it means fruit and enjoyment of all kinds, spiritual as well as other.

The joys of heaven are not like the joys of the earth, which fade away or cloy. The joys of heaven are pure, lasting, and without any of the drawbacks which we associate with the joys of the sense.

... وظِلُّهَا...

and the shade therein:

C1855. Zillun: literally shade, hence, shelter, protection, security.

All these meanings are implied.

Shade is one of the delights of a garden. Cf. 4:57 and n. 579.

...تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَواْ...

such is the End of the Righteous;

...وَّعُقْبَى الْكَافِرِينَ النَّارُ (٣٥)

and the End of Unbelievers is the Fire.

C1856. In this, as in other places, the Fire is contrasted with the Garden, as Misery is contrasted with Bliss.

We can also imagine other incidents in contrast with those of the Garden, e.g., with the Fire will be drought, aridity, thirst, instead of beautiful rivers; pain and suffering, instead of perpetual delight; no protection against the fierceness of the heat, as contrasted with the cool shades ever deepening as you proceed in the Garden.

...وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ...

36. Those to whom We have given the Book rejoice at what hath been revealed unto thee:

C1857. The Book: in a general sense, Revelation.

"Those to whom the Book hath been given" are both;

- the People of the Book of previous revelations, who study the new Revelation in Arabic without prejudice and find in it confirmation of what their ancestors had received and believed in it, and
- the Muslims who receive the Quran with such joy.

...وَمِنَ الأَحْزَابِ مَن يُنكِرُ بَعْضَهُ...

but there are among the clans those who reject a part thereof.

C1858. Ahzab (plural of hizb: parties, sects, troops, clans. The reference may be to the clans mentioned in 33:20 and 22 (that whole Surah is called Ahzab).

But we can understand it in a perfectly general sense. Among all sections of the people there are persons who would receive a portion of Allah's truth but reject whatever does not suit them or fall in with their selfish aims or vain desires. The proper answer to them is:

Surely, Allah's command is universal, -to worship and serve Him and refuse to bend the knee to any other; the man of God finds his staff and support in it; but he must invite all to share in its blessings; it came from Allah, and to Allah shall we all return.

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا أُشْرِكَ بِهِ...

Say:

"I am commanded to worship Allah, and not to join partners with Him.

...إِلَيْهِ أَدْعُو وَإِلَيْهِ مَآبِ (٣٦)

Unto Him do I call,

and unto Him is my return."

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا...

37. Thus have We revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic.

C1859. The Quran is in Arabic; therefore the Arabs, among whom it was promulgated, could have no difficulty in understanding its precepts and using it in judging of right and wrong in all their affairs.

But it is also universal; therefore no one should give preference to his own vain fancies against this authoritative declaration.

...وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءهُم بَعْدَ مَا جَاءكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ...

Wert thou to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee,

...مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلاَ وَاقٍ (٣٧)

then wouldst thou find neither protector nor defender against Allah.

C1860. Cf. 2:120.

The variation is in the single word **"Waq"** here in place of "Nasir" in 2:120. In each case the apt word is chosen not only for the rhythm in its own passage but for the general meaning in the argument.

Section 6

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلاً مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً...

38. We did send Messengers before thee, and appointed for them wives and children:

C1861. All the Prophets of whom we have any detailed knowledge, except one, had wives and children.

The exception is Jesus the son of Mary. But his life was incomplete; his ministry barely lasted three years; his mission was limited; and he was not called upon to deal with the many-sided problems that arise in a highly organized society or State.

We pay equal respect to him, because he was Allah's Messenger; but that is not to say that his Message covers the same universal ground as that of Al-Mustafa.

There is no reproach for a normal human being if he lives a normal human life; there is glory if he beautifies it and sets a nobler example of virtue than other men, as did Al-Mustafa.

...وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَن يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

and it was never the part of a Messenger to bring a Sign except as Allah permitted (or commanded).

C1862. No Prophet performed any Miracle or showed forth any "Signs," except as Allah willed. Allah's Will (*Mashiyat*) is an all-wise, universal Plan, which is not

formed for the benefit of one tribe or *millah* or of one age or country (see also next verse).

The greatest Miracle in history was and is the Quran. We can apprehend its beauty and grandeur to-day as much as did the people of Al-Mustafa's day, -even more, as our collective knowledge of nature and of Allah's creation has increased.

...لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ (٣٨)

For each period is a Book (revealed).

C1863. Kitab: I have translated "a Book (revealed)";

but it can also means "a Law decreed" or "a Decree established."

Ultimately the meaning is the same; for each age, according to Allah's wisdom, His Message is renewed.

يَمْحُو اللّهُ مَا يَشَاء وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ (٣٩)

39. Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with Him is the Mother of the Book.

C1864. Umm-ul-Kitab: Mother of the Book: the original foundation of all revelation; the Essence of Allah's Will and Law.

Cf. 3:7, and n. 347.

...وَإِن مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ

40. Whether We shall show thee (within thy lifetime) part of what We promised them or take to Ourselves thy soul (before it is all accomplished),

...فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلاَغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ (٤٠)

thy duty is to (make the Message) reach them:

it is Our part to call them to account.

...أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْاْ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الأَرْضَ نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا

41. See they not that We gradually reduce the land (in their control) from its outlying borders?

C1865. In the Prophet's ministry at Makkah, the Most stiff-necked opposition came from the seat and centre of power in Makkah. The humbler people -the fringe of Makkan society- came in readily, as also did some tribes round about Makkah.

After the Hijrah there was a hard struggle between Makkah and Madinah and at last the bloodless conquest of Makkah in A.H. 8 made the Pagan structure finally collapse, though it had already been sapped to its foundations. So, generally, Truth finds easiest entrance through the humble and lowly, and not in the beginning at the headquarters of power, but in the fullness of time it makes its way everywhere with irresistible force.

...وَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ لاَ مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ...

(Where) Allah commands, there is none to put back His command:

...وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٤١)

and He is swift in calling to account.

...وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلّٰهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيعًا...

42. Those before them did (also) devise plots;
but in all things the master planning is Allah's.

C1866. Cf. 3:54 and n. 393 .

...يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ...

He knoweth the doings of every soul:

...وَسَيَعْلَمُ الْكُفَّارُ لِمَنْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ (٤٢)

and soon will the Unbelievers know who gets home in the End.

...وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلاً...

43. The Unbelievers say: "No Messenger art thou."

C1867. The enemies of Islam have to acknowledge that Al-Mustafa was a great and noble character, but they deny his Prophethood. He could point to his credentials

from Allah in the work which he achieved, and the Our-an which he brought.

... قُلْ كَفَى بِاللّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ...

Say: "Enough for a witness between me and you is Allah,

... وَمَنْ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ (٤٣)

and such as have knowledge of the Book."

C1868. That is, those who have knowledge of revelation generally will recognise Allah's revelation in the holy Quran.

An alternative reading is "min indihi", which is written the same in Arabic, with only three vowel points different. If we adopt that, the last clause will be:

> "and from Him is (all) knowledge of the Book": i.e., 'as all knowledge of the Book comes from Allah, the Quran also bears witness to me'.

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ

O our Lord! truly Thou dost know what we conceal and what we reveal:

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Ibrahim

إِبْرَاهِيمُ

Introduction and Summary

For the chronology and the general argument of this Surah in the series Surahs 10 to 15, see Introduction to Surah 10.

The special subject matter of this Surah is a continuation of the concluding portion of the last Surah, which explained how Allah's revelation gains ground in spite of selfish men's opposition. Here illustrations are given from the story of Moses and Abraham, and Abraham's Prayer for Makkah forms the core of the Surah.

Summery- Revelation leads men from darkness to light. It comes to each nation in its own language and for its own special

circumstances. So was it with Moses and other Prophets. There was a conflict of evil with good, but evil was destroyed. Parable of the Goodly Tree (14:1-27, and C. 117).

Why will men not receive Allah's grace? Why will they choose to go astray? Abraham prayed to be saved from infidelity, himself and his posterity, and he prayed for Makkah, the city of the new revelation through Arabia. Good and Evil find their proper retribution, and Allah's Plan of Unity will prevail (14:28-52, and C. 118).

C.117 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:1-27)

Revelation leads mankind from the depths
Of darkness into light. It comes
To every age and nation in its own
Language. So was it before; so it is
Always. The Prophets were doubted,
Insulted, threatened, and persecuted,
But their trust was sure in Allah.
It is Evil that will be wiped out.
Allah's Truth is goodly tree,
Firmly established on its roots,
Stretching its branches high and wide,
And bearing good fruit at all times.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الر...

1. Alif Lam Ra.

C1869. For these mystic letters, see Introduction to Surah 10.

... كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ...

A Book which We have revealed unto thee, in order that thou mightest lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light -- by the leave of their Lord --

C1870. It is insisted on that every Prophet speaks not from himself but from Allah. His leading into the light is but by the grace and mercy of Allah, not by any power of his own, or by any merit of those who hear him.

إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ (١)...

to the Way of (Him) Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise! --

C1871. In this and the next verse where the sentence is completed, three qualities of Allah are mentioned, viz.,

- His exalted position above all Creation;
- His goodness, which entities Him, and Him alone, to Praise- and
- His Power in all heaven and earth.

Thus He stands in no need of man's worship; His goodness is all for the good of man (and His creatures); and His control over His creatures is complete; so He can carry out His Will and Plan.

اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ...

2. Of Allah, to Whom do belong all things in the heavens and on earth!

وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ (٢)...

But alas for the Unbelievers for a terrible Penalty (their Unfaith will bring them)! --

C1872. See the last note.

That being the case, in what a sad plight are those who reject the Faith and Grace offered to them, and draw down on themselves all the terrible consequences of that rejection, -the Wrath to come!

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الآخِرَةِ...

3. Those who love the life of this world more than the Hereafter,

C1873. The Unbelievers are here characterized in three ways:

1. they love this ephemeral life and its vanities more than the true Life which goes into the Hereafter;
2. they not only harm themselves but mislead others,
3. their own crooked minds search for something crooked in Allah's straight Path (Cf. 7:45).

   But in doing so, they go farther and farther from the Truth.

...وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا...

who hinder (men) from the Path of Allah and seek therein something crooked:

...أُوْلَـئِكَ فِي ضَلاَلٍ بَعِيدٍ (٣)

they are astray by a long distance.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلاَّ بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ...

4. We sent a Messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them.

C1874. If the object of a Message is to make things clear, it must be delivered in the language current among the people to whom the Messenger is sent. Through them it can reach all mankind.

There is even a wider meaning for "language". It is not merely a question of alphabets, letters, or words. Each age or people -or world in a psychological sense- casts its thoughts in a certain mould or form.

Allah's Message -being universal- can be expressed in all moulds and forms, and is equally valid and necessary for all grades of humanity, and must therefore be explained to each according to his or her capacity or receptivity. In this respect the Quran is marvelous. It is for the simplest as well as the most advanced.

...فَيُضِلُّ اللّهُ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء...

Now Allah leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases:

C1875. 'Whom He pleases'; the usual expression for *Mashiyat*, the universal Will and Plan, which is all-wise and on the highest plane of goodness and righteousness.

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٤)

and He is Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom.

...وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّور

5. We sent Moses with Our Signs (and the command),
"Bring out thy people from the depths of darkness into light,

...وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللّهِ...

and teach them to remember the Days of Allah."

C1876. "The Days of Allah": the days when Allah's mercy was specially shown to them.

Every day and every hour and minute, Allah's grace flows to us abundantly, but there are special events in personal or national history which may be commemorated as Red-letter Days. Those to the Israelites were set out in great detail in 2:30-61 and on other places.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (٥)

Verily in this there are Signs for such as are firmly patient and constant -- grateful and appreciative.

C1877. Sabbar is the intensive form, and includes all the ideas implied in Sabr (2:45 and n. 61, and 2:153, n. 157) in an intensive degree.

Shakur and Shakir have in them the idea of appreciation, recognition, gratitude as shown in deeds of goodness and righteousness.

Both terms are applied to Allah as well as to men.

A slight distinction in shades of meaning may be noted.

Shakur implies that the appreciation is even for the smallest favours and response on the other side; it is a mental attitude independent of specific facts.

Shakir implies bigger and more specific things.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ...

6. Remember! Moses said to his people:

...اذْكُرُواْ نِعْمَةَ اللّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَنجَاكُم مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ...

"Call to mind the favor of Allah to you when He delivered you from the people of Pharaoh:

C1878. Cf. 2:49.

The reference back to Israel and Moses serves a double purpose;

- as an appeal to the People of the Book, and
- as a reminder to the Quraish of the favour now conferred on them by the coming among them of a greater Prophet than Moses.

... يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءكُمْ...

They set you hard tasks and punishments, slaughtered your sons, and let your womenfolk live:

...وَفِي ذَلِكُم بَلاء مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ (٦)

therein was a tremendous trial from your Lord."

Section 2

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ...

7. And remember! your Lord caused to be declared (publicly):

"If ye are grateful, I will add more (favors) unto you;

C1879. The various shades of meaning in **Shakara** are explained in n. 1877 above.

...وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ (٧)

but if ye show ingratitude, truly My punishment is terrible indeed."

Kafara implies:

- to reject Faith, as in 2:6 and n. 30;
- to be ungrateful for mercies and favours received, as here;
- to resist Allah or Faith, as in 3:13;
- to deny (the Signs of Allah), as in 3:21, or deny the mission of Messengers, as in 14:9.

Kafir in the most general sense may be translated "Unbeliever".

وَقَالَ مُوسَى إِن تَكْفُرُوا ...

8. And Moses said:

"If ye show ingratitude,

C1880. Ingratitude not only in feeling or words, but in disobedience, and willful rejection and rebellion.

If the whole of you band together against Allah, you do not detract from Allah's power one atom, because, Allah does not depend upon you for anything, and His goodness and righteousness and praiseworthiness cannot be called in question by your contumacy.

... أَنتُمْ وَمَن فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ اللّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ (٨)

ye and all on earth together -- yet is Allah free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

C1881. Cf. 22:64, 29:6, 35:15. [Eds.]

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ...

9. Has not the story reached you, (O people!), of those who (went) before you? --

of the people of Noah, and 'Ad, and Thamud? --

...وَالَّذِينَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلاَّ اللّهُ...

and of those who (came) after them?

None knows them but Allah.

C1882. Even the names of all the Prophets are not known to men, much less the details of their story. If some "news" of them (for the word translated "story" may also be translated "news") reaches us, it is to give us spiritual instruction for our own lives.

...جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُّواْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ...

To them came Messengers with Clear (Signs); but they put their hands up to their mouths,

C1883. That is, either that the Unbelievers metaphorically put their hands up to the mouths of the Prophets to try to prevent them from proclaiming their Message, or

that the Unbelievers put up their fingers to their own mouths, as much as to say "Don't listen to them," or bite their own fingers in token of incontinent rage.

Whatever construction we adopt, the meaning is that they were intolerant of their prophets even as the Quraish were intolerant of Al Mustafa and did all they could to suppress Allah's Truth.

...وَقَالُواْ إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ...

and said: "We do deny (the mission) on which ye have been sent,

...وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ (٩)

and we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt as to that to which ye invite us."

C1884. Cf. 11:62.

The distinction between **Shakk** and **raib** may be noted.

Shakk is intellectual doubt, a doubt as to fact; is it so, or is it not?

Raib is something more than intellectual doubt; a suspicion that there is fraud or deception; something

that upsets your moral belief and causes a disquiet in your soul.

In 52:30, it is used as equivalent to "calamity" or "disaster", some punishment or evil. Both kinds of doubts and suspicions are hinted at against Prophets of Allah.

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

10. Their Messengers said:

"Is there a doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?

...يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُم مِّن ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

It is He Who invites you, in order that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite for a term appointed!"

C1885. The Prophets (generally) clear both kinds of doubt.

"You cannot doubt the existence of Allah! Behold His works! We are not speaking for ourselves or deceiving you. We speak according to the Message of inspiration from Allah."

Notice that the doubters had said to the Prophets, -Ye invite us.- The Prophets say: "It is Allah Who invites you, and He does it to save you by His grace, and give you plenty of time (but not indefinite time) for penitence and amendment."

...قَالُوا إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا...

They said:

"Ah! ye are no more than human, like ourselves!

...تُرِيدُونَ أَن تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَآؤُنَا... ...

Ye wish to turn us away from the (gods) our fathers used to worship:

...فَأْتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٠)

then bring us some clear authority."

C1886. Infidelity is illogical and argues in a circle.

If the Prophet speaks of Allah, the Unbeliever says, "You are only a man!"

"But I speak from Allah!"

"Oh well! our ancestral ways of worship are good enough for us!"

"What if they are wrong?"

"What authority have you for saying so?"

"The highest authority, that from Allah!"

And so we come back full circle! Then the wicked rely on violence, but it recoils on them, and they perish.

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِن نَّحْنُ إِلاَّ بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ...

11. Their Messengers said to them:

"True, we are human like yourselves,

...وَلَـكِنَّ اللّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَى مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ...

but Allah doth grant His grace to such of His servants as He pleases.

...وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَن نَّأْتِيَكُم بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ...

It is not for us to bring you an authority except as Allah permits.

...وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١١)

And on Allah let all men of faith put their trust.

وَمَا لَنَا أَلاَّ نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبُلَنَا...

12. "No reason have we why we should not put our trust on Allah. Indeed He has guided us to the Ways we (follow).

...وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَى مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا...

We shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you may cause us:

...وَعَلَى اللّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (١٢)

for those who put their trust should put their trust on Allah."

Section 3

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِنَآ أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا...

13. And the Unbelievers said to their Messengers:

"Be sure we shall drive you out of our land, or ye shall return to our religion."

C1887. The arguments in a circle were explained in the last note. But Infidelity looks upon argument merely as an amusement. Its chief weapon is physical force.

As its only belief is in materialism, it thinks that threats of force will put down the righteous. It offers the choice between exile and violence against conformity to its own standards of evil, which it thinks to be good.

But Faith is not to be cowed down by Force. Its source of strength is Allah, and it receives the assurance that violence will perish ultimately by violence, and that Faith and Good must stand and be established. In fact the good must inherit the earth and the evil ones be blotted out.

فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٣)...

But their Lord inspired (this Message) to them:

"Verily We shall cause the wrongdoers to perish!

وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ الأَرْضَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ...

14. "And verily We shall cause you to abide in the land, and succeed them.

ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي ...

This for such as fear the time when they shall stand before My tribunal --

C1888. "Fear" means here "have present before their minds something which should cause fear, so that they should shape their conduct in order to avoid the ill consequences of wickedness."

وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ (١٤) ...

such as fear the punishment denounced."

وَاسْتَفْتَحُواْ ...

15. But they sought victory and decision (there and then),

C1889. Cf. 8:19.

1 have assumed that "they" in this verse is the same as "them" in the preceding verse, i.e., the ungodly.

Hoping for victory they forced a decision, and they got it-against themselves.

Or they challenged a punishment, and it came in good time.

Some Commentators construe "they" here to mean "the Prophets": in that case the verse would mean:

"The Prophets prayed for a victory and decision, and the ungodly were frustrated in their efforts to suppress the Truth."

... وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ (١٥)

and frustration was the lot of every powerful obstinate transgressor.

C1890. Cf. 11:59.

مِّن وَرَآئِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَى مِن مَّاء صَدِيدٍ (١٦)

16. In front of such a one is Hell, and he is given, for drink, boiling fetid water.

يَتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلاَ يَكَادُ يُسِيغُهُ...

17. In gulps will he sip it, but never well he be near swallowing it down his throat:

...وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ...

Death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die:

...وَمِن وَرَآئِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ (١٧)

and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting.

C1891. A graphic and deterrent picture, from the preaching of the earlier Prophets, of unrelieved horror of

the torments of Hell. The door of escape by annihilation is also closed to them.

مَّثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِرَبِّهِمْ...

18. The parable of those who reject their Lord

...أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ...

is that their works are as ashes, on which the wind blows furiously on a tempestuous day:

C1892. Note the fullness of the parable.

The works of the ungodly are in themselves light and unsubstantial like ashes; they are the useless rubbish that remains out of the faculties and opportunities which they have misused by burning them up. Further, the ashes are blown about hither and thither by the wind: the ungodly have no compass, direction, or purpose that can stand. The wind, too, which blows on them is no ordinary wind, nor the day on which they seek to enjoy the fruits of their labours an ordinary tranquil day: a furious gale is blowing, for such is the Wrath of Allah.

They have neither internal peace nor external gain. In the scattering of the ashes they lose control even of such things as they might have earned but for their misdeeds. Their whole nature is contaminated. All their wishes go astray. They are carried so far, far away from what was in their minds. What did they aim at, and what did they achieve?

...لاَّ يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُواْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ...

No power have they over aught that they have earned:

...ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلاَلُ الْبَعِيدُ (١٨)

That is the straying far, far (from the goal).

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ بِالْحقِّ...

19. Seest thou not that Allah created the Heavens and the earth in Truth?

C1893. Haqq: Truth, Right, Righteousness, True proportions, Reality.

Allah's creation is not to be trifled with. It is built on righteousness, and those who do not obey its laws must give place to others who do.

This warning is repeated again and again in history and in revelation. Cf. 6:73.

...إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (١٩)

If He so will, He can remove you and put (in your place) a new Creation?

وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ (٢٠)

20. Nor is that for Allah any great matter.

C1894. 'Aziz: great, mighty, excellent, powerful, rare, precious.

...وَبَرَزُواْ لِلّهِ جَمِيعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفَاء لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُواْ

21. They will all be marshaled before Allah together:

then will the weak say to those who were arrogant,

C1895. When the time for judgment comes, there are two kinds of disillusionment waiting for the ungodly:

1. Those who were misled and failed to see that each soul bears its own personal responsibility (2:134) and cannot shift it on to others, will turn to those who misled them, in the hope that they might intercede for them or do something to help them. They receive a plain answer as in the latter part of this verse.
2. Those who relied on Satan, His answer (in 14:22 below) is frank, cynical and brutal.

...إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّغْنُونَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ...

"For us, we but followed you; can ye then avail us at all against the wrath of Allah?"

...قَالُوا لَوْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهَدَيْنَاكُمْ...

They will reply,

"If we had received the guidance of Allah, we should have given it to you:

C1896. Those whose power or specious intelligence or influence misled them -such as false priests or leaders- will find themselves in a parlous state.

How can they help others?

They themselves failed to profit from Allah's guidance, and they can with some justice retort that they put them in the wrong path as they followed it themselves!

...سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَجَزِعْنَا أَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِن مَّحِيصٍ (٢١)

to us it makes no difference (now) whether we rage, or bear (these torments) with patience:

for ourselves there is no way of escape."

Section 4

...وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ

22. And Satan will say when the matter is decided:

C1897. After the Judgment, Evil declares itself in its true colours. Frankly it says:

> 'I deceived you. The promise of Allah was true, but you believed me rather than Allah. I had no power to force you. I had but to call you, and you came running after me. You must blame yourselves.
>
> Did you think I was equal with Allah?
>
> I know too well that I was not and never could be. If you did wrong, you must suffer the Penalty.'

"It was Allah Who gave you a promise of truth:

...وَوَعَدتُّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ...

I too promised, but I failed in my promise to you.

...وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلاَّ أَن دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي...

I had no authority over you except to call you, but ye listened to me:

...فَلاَ تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُواْ أَنفُسَكُم...

then reproach not me, but reproach your own souls.

...مَّا أَنَاْ بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ...

I cannot listen to your cries, nor can ye listen to mine.

...إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَآ أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِن قَبْلُ...

I reject your former act in associating me with Allah.

C1898. See the last note.

An alternative interpretation of this sentence may be:

"I had already beforehand rebelled against Allah with Whom ye associated me."

...إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢٢)

For wrongdoers there must be a Grievous Penalty."

وَأُدْخِلَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ...

23. But those who believe and work righteousness will be admitted to Gardens

...تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ...

beneath which rivers flow --

to dwell therein for aye with the leave of their Lord:

...تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلاَمٌ (٢٣)

their greeting therein will be: "Peace!"

C1899. How this contrasts with the misery and the mutual self-recriminations of the ungodly!

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلاً...

24. Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? --

...كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ (٢٤)

a goodly Word like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens --

C1900. "Goodly word" is usually interpreted as the Divine Word, the Divine Message, the True Religion.

It may also be interpreted in a more general sense as a word of truth, a word of goodness or kindness, which follows from a true appreciation of Religion. For Religion includes our duty to Allah and our duty to man.

The **"evil word"** is opposite to this: false religion, blasphemy, false speech, or preaching or teaching unkindness and wrong-doing. (R).

تُؤْتِي أُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا...

25. It brings forth its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord.

C1901. The goodly tree is known for:

- its beauty; it gives pleasure to all who see it;
- its stability; it remains firm and unshaken in storms, because its roots are firmly fixed in the earth;
- its wide compass; its branches reach high, and it catches all the sunshine from heaven, and gives shade to countless birds in its branches and men and animals beneath it, and
- its abundant fruit, which it yields at all times.

So is the Good Word.

- It is as beautiful as it is true.
- It abides in all the changes and chances of this life, and even beyond (see verse 27 below);
- it is never shaken by sorrow or what seems to us calamity;

- its roots are deep down in the bed-rock facts of life. Its reach is universal, above, around, below:
- it is illuminated by the divine light from heaven, and its consolation reaches countless beings of all grades of life.
- Its fruit-the enjoyment of its blessings-is not confined to one season or one set of circumstances;

furthermore the fortunate man who is the vehicle of that word has no self-pride; he attributes all its goodness, and his act in spreading it, to the Will and Leave of Allah.

Cf. the New Testament Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-6) or of the Mustard-seed (Matt. 13:31- 32).

In this Parable of the Quran there are fewer words and more spiritual meaning, and the emphasis is on more essential things.

...وَيَضْرِبُ اللّهُ الأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٥)

So Allah sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition.

...وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ

26. And the parable of an evil Word is that of an evil tree.

...اجْتُثَّتْ مِن فَوْقِ الأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِن قَرَارٍ (٢٦)

It is torn up by the root, from the surface of the earth:

it has no stability.

C1902. The evil tree is the opposite of the goodly tree. The parallelism of contrast can be followed out in all the details of the last note.

...يُثَبِّتُ اللّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الآخِرَةِ

27. Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the Word that stands firm, in this world and in the Hereafter;

...وَيُضِلُّ اللّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ

but Allah will leave, to stray, those who do wrong:

...وَيَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَاء (٢٧)

Allah doeth what He willeth.

C1903. His Will and Plan may be above comprehension, but will prevail over all things. It is not like the will of man, who may plan good things but is not necessarily able to carry them out.

C.118 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:28-52)

But the evil not only choose evil
For themselves but mislead others
To perdition. The godly should learn
From the Signs of Allah all around them,
And be on their guard against all
That is false. So Abraham prayed
Not only for his posterity, but for all;
For he foresaw the universality
Of Allah's Message in Islam,
That leads to the sublime doctrine
Of Oneness, which will be seen
In its fullness on the Great Day
When a new Earth and a new Heaven
Will proclaim the end of Evil
And the adjustment of all this life's accounts.

Section 5

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ (٢٨)

28. Hast thou not turned thy vision to those who have changed the favor of Allah into blasphemy and caused their people to descend to the House of Perdition? --

C1904. There is a particular and a general meaning.

- The particular meaning is understood to be a reference to the Makkan Pagans who turned the House of Allah into a place for the worship of horrible idols and the practice of unseemly rites and cults.

  There is no real difficulty in accepting this as part of a late Makkan Surah even without supposing it to be a prophecy.

  The Makkan Pagans had turned Religion into a blasphemous superstition, and were misguiding their people, persecuting the true Messenger of Allah and all who followed his teaching. Their cup of iniquity seemed about full, and they seemed to be heading to perdition, as later events indeed showed to be the case.

- The general meaning is also clear. Selfish men, when they seize power, want worship for themselves or their Phantasies, in derogation of the true God. Power, which should have been an instrument of good, becomes in their hands an instrument of evil. They and their people rush headlong to perdition. "These be thy gods, 0 Israel!" has been a cry repeated again and again in history, in the face, or at the back, of men of God!

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ (٢٩)

29. Into Hell?

They will burn therein -- an evil place to stay in!

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا لِّيُضِلُّوا عَن سَبِيلِهِ...

30. And they set up (idols) as equal to Allah, to mislead (men) from the Path!

...قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ (٣٠)

Say:

"Enjoy (your brief power)! But verily ye are making straightway for Hell!"

قُل لِّعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ يُقِيمُواْ الصَّلاَةَ ...

31. Speak to My servants who have believed, that they may establish regular prayers,

C1905. Putting ourselves back in the position in which the Muslim community found themselves in Makkah just before the Hijrah, we can imagine how much encouragement and consolation they needed from the preaching, the Faith, and the steadfast character of Al-Mustafa.

Intolerant persecution was the order of the day; neither the life nor the property or reputation of the Muslims was safe. They are asked to find strength and tranquility in prayer and in helping each other according to their needs and resources.

... وَيُنفِقُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلاَنِيَةً...

and spend (in charity) out of the Sustenance We have given them, secretly and openly,

C1906. Here, as elsewhere, **"Sustenance"** is to be taken in the literal as well as the metaphorical sense.

There were many among the Muslims who were poor, or slaves, or depressed, because they were deprived of the means of livelihood on account of their Faith. They were to be fed, clothed, and sheltered, by those who had means.

Charity was to be ordinarily secret, so as to cut out all show or parade, and perhaps also lest the enemy should dry up those sources by unprincipled violence; but there must be much that had to be open and organized, so that all the needy could know where to go to be relieved.

...مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لاَّ بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلاَ خِلاَلٌ (٣١)

before the coming of a Day in which there will be neither mutual bargaining, nor befriending.

C1907. The great Day of Reckoning would be one on which all values would be changed. Wealth, as understood in this world, would no longer count.

Should we not therefore use any wealth we have in this life, to give here and receive there?

Bai includes all bargaining, -barter, purchase and sale, etc.

In this world, where wealth has some value, let us spend it and get for ourselves "treasures in heaven."

In the next life each man will stand on his merits and personal responsibility. One man cannot help another. Let us here help each other to become true and righteous, so that our personal account may be favourable there.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ...

32. It is Allah Who hath created the heavens and the earth

...وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ...

and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits wherewith to feed you;

...وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ...

it is He Who hath made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His command;

...وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الأَنْهَارَ (٣٢)

and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you.

C1908. We must realise that behind all our strength, skill, and intelligence there is the power and goodness of Allah, Who gave us all these things. Man can understand and control the forces of nature so as to bring them to his own service: he can only do so, because

- he has got these gifts from Allah, and
- Allah has fixed definite laws in nature, of which he can take advantage by Allah's command and permission.

He has been made Vicegerent on earth (2:30);

Allah commanded the highest creatures to bow down to Adam (2:34).

Man, by Allah's command, can use rain to produce food for himself; make ships to sail the seas; use rivers as highways, and cut canals for traffic and irrigation.

Not only this, but even the heavenly bodies can (by Allah's command) contribute to his needs (see next verse).

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَآئِبَيْنِ...

33. And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses:

C1909. The sun gives out heat, which is the source of all life and energy on this planet, and produces the seasons of the year, by utilizing which man can supply his needs, not only material, but immaterial in the shape of light, health, and other blessings.

The sun and the moon together produce tides, and are responsible for atmospheric changes which are of the highest importance in the life of man.

The succession of Day and Night is due to the apparent daily course of the sun through the skies; and the cool light of the moon performs other services different from those of warm day-light.

Because there are laws here, which man can understand and calculate, he can use all such things for his own service, and in that sense the heavenly bodies are themselves made subject to him by Allah's command.

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ (٣٣)...

and the Night and the Day hath He (also) made subject you.

وَآتَاكُم مِّن كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ...

34. And He giveth you of all that ye ask for.

C1910. Sincere and true prayer in faith is answered by Allah. Thus He gives us everything which a wise and benevolent Providence can give.

...وَإِن تَعُدُّواْ نِعْمَتَ اللّهِ لاَ تُحْصُوهَا...

But if ye count the favors of Allah, never will ye be able to number them:

...إِنَّ الإِنسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ (٣٤)...

verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude.

C1911. I have tried to render the intensive forms of the Arabic by what I consider their near equivalent here:

the phrase "given up to injustice and ingratitude" suggests habitual ignoring of just values and ingratitude for the innumerable gifts and favours which Allah has showered on mankind.

Section 6

...وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ ...

35. Remember Abraham said:

C1912. This Prayer of Abraham, the True in Faith, the progenitor of the Semitic peoples and the Prototype of their Religion, is introduced in this place, to illustrate the points referred to in the preceding section, 14:31-34, viz.,

- how the new Revelation through the Ka'bah bears out the universal Revelation of Prayer and Charity,
- Love of Allah and man,
- Recognition of Allah's handiwork in nature, and
- Insistence on man's turning away from false worship and ingratitude to Allah.

Notice the four divisions into which it falls:

1. verses 35-36 are spoken by Abraham as on his own behalf ("O my Lord!");
2. verses 37-38 are spoken on behalf of his progeny ("O our Lord!") but with special reference to the elder branch, the children of Isma'il;

3. verses 39-40 are again a personal appeal, but both branches of his family, viz., the sons of Isma'il and Isaac, are expressly mentioned;

4. verse 41 is a Prayer for himself, his parents, and all Believers, typifying that in the universality of Islam all nations are to be blessed.

Jerusalem, for the Mosaic Law and the Gospel of Jesus, was the centre and symbol for the Jewish race, though of course all Allah's Truth is universal;

Makkah, the centre of the Arab race, was to throw off its tribal character and become universal, in spite of the Makkans themselves.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَـٰذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا...

"O my Lord! make this city one of peace and security:

...وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَن نَّعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ (٣٥)

and preserve me and my sons from worshipping idols.

C1913. Cf. 2:125-129.

Abraham (with Isma'il) built the Ka'bah, and Abraham asks a blessing on his handiwork and forgiveness for such lapses into idolatry as both branches of his family might fall into.

رَبِّ إِنَّهُنَّ أَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ...

36. "O my Lord! they have indeed led astray many among mankind:

...فَمَن تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي...

he then who follows my (ways) is of me,

...وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣٦)

and he that disobeys me -- but thou art indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنتُ مِن ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِندَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ...

37. "O our Lord!

I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by thy Sacred House;

C1914. The Makkan valley is enclosed by hills on all sides, unlike Madinah, which has level cultivated plains. But just because of its natural isolation, it is fitted to be a centre for Prayer and Praise.

...رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلاَةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ...

in order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular prayer:
so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them,

...وَارْزُقْهُم مِّنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ ...

and feed them with Fruits:

C1915. Cf. 2:126, and n. 128. (The "Fruits" are there explained).

The righteous, though they have to have sustenance, both in a literal and figurative sense, require also the love and sympathy of their fellow-men.

... لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ (٣٧)

so that they may give thanks.

...رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ

38. "O our Lord!
truly Thou dost know what we conceal and what we reveal:

...وَمَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي الأَرْضِ وَلاَ فِي السَّمَاء (٣٨)

for nothing whatever is hidden from Allah, whether on earth or in heaven.

C1916. In Abraham's prophetic mind was the secret and open enmity or contempt which the Children of Israel were to have for the Children of Isma'il (Arabs). He prays to Allah that they may be united in Islam, as indeed they were, except a small remnant.

...الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي عَلَى الْكِبَرِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَقَ

39. "Praise be to Allah, who hath granted unto me in old age Isma'il and Isaac:

إِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعُ الدُّعَاء (٣٩)...

for truly my Lord is He, the Hearer of Prayer!

C1917. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5); and as Isma'il was 13 years old when Abraham was 99. (Gen. 17:24-25),

Isma'il was also a son of his father's old age, having been born when Abraham was 86 years old. The younger son's progeny developed the Faith of Israel and that of Christ; the elder son's progeny perfected the more universal Faith of Islam, the Faith of Abraham the True,

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي

"O my Lord!

make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring,

رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاء

O our Lord!

and accept Thou my Prayer.

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ

الْحِسَابُ

"O our Lord!

cover (us) with Thy Forgiveness -- me, my parents, and (all) Believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established!"

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي...

40. "O my Lord!

make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring,

C1918. Abraham prays for both branches of his family, having a wider vision than some of the later Children of Israel.

...رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ (٤٠)

O our Lord! and accept Thou my Prayer.

... رَبَّنَا

41. "O our Lord!

C1919. Read again n. 1912 above.

Having prayed for his progeny, Abraham now prays for Allah's grace on himself, his parents, and the whole Brotherhood of Faith, irrespective of family or race or time, to be perfected in the ideal of Islam.

... اغْفِرْ لِي ...

cover (us) with Thy Forgiveness --

C1920. For the shades of meaning in the different words for Forgiveness, see n. 110 to 2:109.

... وَلِوَالِدَيَّ ...

me, my parents,

C1921. My parents. Abraham's father was an idolater (43:26; 6:74). Not only that, but he persecuted the Faith of Unity and threatened Abraham with stoning and exile (19:46); and he and his people cast him into the Fire to be burned (21:52, 68).

Yet Abraham's heart was tender, and he prayed for forgiveness for his father because of a promise which he had made (9:114), though he renounced the land of his fathers (Chaldea).

... وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ (٤١)

and (all) Believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established!"

C1922. At the final Reckoning, all that may seem inequality or injustice in this world will be redressed. But the merits of the best of us will need Allah's Grace to establish us in that lasting Felicity which is promised to the righteous. And Abraham, as the father of Prophecy, prayed for all,-for the Universal Faith perfected in Islam.

Section 7

وَلاَ تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّهَ غَافِلاً عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ...

42. Think not that Allah doth not heed the deeds of those who do wrong.

...إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الأَبْصَارُ (٤٢)

He but giveth them respite against a Day when the eyes will fixedly stare in horror --

مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ لاَ يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ...

43. They are running forward with necks outstretched, their heads uplifted, their gaze returning not towards them,

...وَأَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَاء (٤٣)

and their hearts a (gaping) void.

C1923. A picture of horror. The evil ones, when they realise the situation, will be dazed; their eyes will stare without expression, and never move back; their necks will be outstretched; their heads uplifted in terror of the Judgment from on High; and their hearts become empty of all hope or intelligence as the physical heart might become empty of blood when the circulation stops. In this state they will press forward to Judgment.

وَأَنذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمُ الْعَذَابُ فَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ...

44. So warn mankind of the Day when the Wrath will reach them: then will the wrongdoers say:

...رَبَّنَا أَخِّرْنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ نُّجِبْ دَعْوَتَكَ وَنَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُلَ...

"Our Lord! respite us (if only) for a short term: we will answer Thy Call, and follow the Messengers!"

...أَوَلَمْ تَكُونُوا أَقْسَمْتُم مِّن قَبْلُ مَا لَكُم مِّن زَوَالٍ (٤٤)

"What! were ye not wont to swear aforetime that ye should suffer no decline?

C1924. Zawal: decline from the zenith, as that of the sun, decline from the highest point reached by a heavenly body in its course through the sky.

The ungodly are apt to think that their power will remain in the ascendant, on account of some material advantages given them temporarily by Allah, but they are constantly receiving warnings in history and revelation and from the example of others before them.

There is a warning to the contemporary Pagan Makkans here; but the warning is perfectly general, and for all time.

وَسَكَنتُمْ فِي مَسَاكِنِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ...

45. "And ye dwelt in the dwellings of men who wronged their own souls:

...وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ...

ye were clearly shown how We dealt with them;

...وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الأَمْثَالَ (٤٥)

and We put forth many parables in your behalf!"

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِندَ اللّهِ مَكْرُهُمْ...

46. Mighty indeed were the plots which they made, but their plots were (well) within the sight of Allah,

...وَإِن كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُولَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ (٤٦)

even though they were such as to shake the hills!

فَلاَ تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهِ رُسُلَهُ...

47. Never think that Allah would fail His Messengers in His promise:

...إِنَّ اللّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ (٤٧)

for Allah is Exalted in power -- the Lord of Retribution.

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ...

48. One day the Earth will be changed to a different Earth, and so will be the Heavens,

C1925. "A new earth and a new heaven" refers to the entirely changed conditions at the end of things as we know them.

Cf. 20:105-107, 39:67, 69, 73:14, 82:1, 84:3. ®.

...وَبَرَزُواْ للّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ (٤٨)

and (men) will be marshalled forth, before Allah, the One, the Irresistible;

وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقَرَّنِينَ فِي الأَصْفَادِ (٤٩)

49. And thou wilt see the Sinners that day bound together in fetters --

C1926. Cf. 36:8, 40:71, 69:30. [Eds.]

سَرَابِيلُهُم ...

50. Their garments

C1927. Sirbal,- plural, Sarabil,- a garment or coat of mail, breast plate;

something covering the most vital parts of the body; like the shirt or the Indian kurta.

... مِّن قَطِرَانٍ وَتَغْشَى وُجُوهَهُمْ النَّارُ (٥٠)

of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire;

C1928. Qatiran: black pitch, a resinous substance exuding from certain kinds of trees like the terebinth or the pines, or distilled from wood or coal.

It catches fire readily. Issuing from the upper garments (Sartabil) the flames soon cover the face, the most expressive part of man's essence or being.

The metaphor of fetters (n. 1926) is now changed to that of pitch, which darkens and sets on fire the soul of man.

لِيَجْزِيَ اللّٰهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ...

51. That Allah may requite each soul according to its deserts;

C1929. Its deserts: i.e., according to what it earned by its own acts, good or evil, in its life of probation.

...إِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٥١)

and verily Allah is Swift in calling account.

C1930. Swift in calling to account: We can understand this in two significations.

1. Let not the wicked think that because Allah, out of His infinite grace and mercy, grants respite, therefore the retribution will be slow in coming.

   When the time comes in accordance with Allah's Plan and Wisdom, the retribution will come so swiftly that the ungodly will be surprised and they will wish they could get more respite (14:44).

2. On the great Day of Reckoning, let it not be supposed that, because there will be millions of souls to be judged, there will be any delay in judgment as in a human tribunal.

   It will be a new world and beyond the flight of Time. Or

   if a metaphor from time as we conceive it in this world can be taken, it will all be as it were in the twinkling of an eye (16:77).

هَـٰذَا بَلَاغٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ...

52. Here is a Message for mankind: let them take warning therefrom,

...وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَـٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

and let them know that He is (no other than) One Allah:

C1931. Here is another aspect of the Truth of Unity. Allah being One, all justice is of one standard, for Truth is one, and we see it as one as soon as the scales of

phenomenal diversity fall from our eyes. The one true Reality then emerges.

Blessed are those who treasured this Truth in their souls already in their life of probation.

وَلِيَذَّكَّرَ أُوْلُواْ الأَلْبَابِ (٥٢)...

let men of understanding take heed.





The Absolute Reality



Verily We: It is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Qur'ân) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Hijr

الحِجْر

Introduction and Summary

This is the last of the six Surahs of the Alif, Lam, Mim series (10 to 15). Its place in chronology is the late Makkan period, probably somewhere near the middle of that period. See Introduction to Surah 10, where will be found also an indication of the general subject matter of the whole series in the gradation of Quranic teaching.

The special subject matter of this Surah is the protection of Allah's Revelation and Allah's Truth. Evil arose from Pride and the warping of man's will, but Allah's Mercy is the antidote, as was proved in the case of Abraham and Lut, and might have been proved by the people of the Aykah and the Hijr if they had

only attended to Allah's "Signs". The Quran, beginning with the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses, is the precious vehicle for the praises of Allah.

Summery- Allah will guard His Revelation, in spite of the cavils of the Unbelievers: Allah is the source of all things; He knows His own people, whom He will gather to Himself (15:1-25, and C. 119).

How Evil arose through the pride of Iblis, to whom to respite was granted for a period; but neither fear evil affect those who receive Allah's Message (15:26-50, and C. 120).

The Mercy of Allah to Abraham was conveyed by the same messengers that were sent to destroy the people of Lut for their unspeakable crimes; Evil brought its retribution also on the Companions of the Wood (Al Aykah) and of the Rocky Tract (Al Hijr) (15:51-84, and C. 121).

The Quran and its Surahs teach you to celebrate Allah's praises, learn humility in worship, and serve Allah all your life (15:85-99, and C. 122).

C.119 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(15:1-25)

Allah's Truth makes all things clear, and He
Will guard it. But His Signs are not
For those who mock. Who fails to see
The majesty, beauty, order, and harmony
Blazoned in His Creation, and His goodness
To all His creatures, in the heavens
And on earth? With Him are the sources
Of all things, and He doth freely give
His gifts in due measure. He holds
The keys of Life and Death, and He will remain
When all else passes away.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الرَ...

1. Alif Lam Ra.

C1932. For these mystic letters, see Introduction to Surah 10.

...تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ ...

These are the Ayats of Revelation --

C1933. Cf. 10:1, and n. 1382.

... وَقُرْآنٍ مُّبِينٍ (١)

of a Qur'án that makes things clear.

C1934. Note how appropriately the different phrases in which the Quran is characterized bring out its different aspects as a Revelation.

Let us just consider the phrases used at the beginning of the six ***Alif Lam Mim*** Surahs of which this is the last in order of arrangement.

- In 10:1 we read, "Ayats (or verses or Signs) of the Book of Wisdom",

  the theme being the wonders of Allah's creation, and its relation to His Revelation.

- In 11:1 we read, "a Book, with verses basic or fundamental, further explained in detail":

  the theme is Allah's Justice and punishment, to preserve the fundamental scheme of His Laws.

- In 12:1 we read, "The Symbols verses of the Perspicuous Book";

  the wonderful unfolding of Allah's Plan is explained in Joseph's story.

- In 13:1 we read, "The Signs (or verses) of the Book":

the contrasts in the modes of Allah's Revelation and its reception by man are pointed out, but not illustrated by detailed examples as in Joseph's perspicuous story.

- In 14:1 we read, "A Book revealed to lead out of darkness into light":

  the theme being Abraham's prayer for man to be rescued from the darkness of false worship into the light of Unity.

- Here, in 15:1 we read, "Ayats (or verses) of Revelation,-of a Quran that makes things clear (or perspicuous)":

  the theme being an explanation of evil, and how Allah's Truth is protected from it.

رُّبَمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوْ كَانُواْ مُسْلِمِينَ (٢)

2. Again and again will those who disbelieve wish that they had bowed (to Allah's Will) in Islam.

C1935. The time must inevitably come when those who allow themselves to be deceived by falsehood or deliberately break Allah's Law will find themselves in a terrible plight. They will then wish, ardently and again and again, that they had sought Allah's Will and walked in the light of Truth.

That time may be early or late,-in this life, or at death, or at the Day of Judgment, but it must come. Man's own highest interest requires that he should awake to the Reality before it is too late for repentance.

ذَرْهُمْ يَأْكُلُواْ وَيَتَمَتَّعُواْ ...

3. Leave them alone, to enjoy (the good things of this life) and to please themselves:

C1936. Literally, "to eat", Cf. 5:66 and n. 776.

... وَيُلْهِهِمُ الأَمَلُ...

let (false) Hope amuse them:

فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣)...

soon will knowledge (undeceive them).

C1937. The foolish and the wicked set great store by the pleasures of this world. In their pride they think they have all knowledge. In the fullness of knowledge they will see how wrong they were.

Meanwhile those who have received the Light should not for a single moment wonder at the apparent prosperity of the ungodly in this world. They should leave them alone, confident in the goodness and justice of Allah.

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَرْيَةٍ إِلاَّ وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (٤)

4. Never did We destroy a population that had not a term decreed and assigned beforehand.

C1938. Kitabun ma'lum: literally, "a writing known".

There are many shades of meaning implied,

- For every people, as for every individual, there is a definite Term assigned: their faculty of choice gives them the opportunity of moulding their will according to Allah's Will, and thus identifying themselves with Allah's Universal Law. During that Term they will be given plenty of rope; after that Term is past, there will be no opportunity for repentance.

- Neither the righteous nor the ungodly can hasten or delay the doom: Allah's Will must prevail, and He is All-Wise.

- The destruction of a people is not an arbitrary punishment from Allah: the people bring it on themselves by their own choice; for the fixed Law or Decree of Allah is always made known to them beforehand, and in many ways.

مَّا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ (٥)

5. Neither can a people anticipate its Term, nor delay it.

C1939. Cf. 7:34. Also see the last note.

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ (٦)

6. They say: "O thou to whom the Message is being revealed!
Truly thou art mad (or possessed)!

C1940. Al-Mustafa was accused by the ungodly of being mad or possessed, because he spoke of higher things than they knew, and acted from motives purer and nobler than they could understand.

So, in a minor degree, is the lot of all the righteous in the presence of an ungodly world. Their motives, actions, words, hopes, and aspirations are unintelligible to their fellows, and they are accused of being mad or out of their senses. But they know that they are on the right path, and it is the ungodly who are really acting against their own best interests.

لَّوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٧)

7. "Why bringest thou not angels to us if it be that thou hast the Truth?"

C1941. Cf. 6:8-9, and notes 840, 841.

On the part of the unbelievers, this is a mere taunt. They neither believe in Allah nor in angels nor in revelation nor in any but material things. It is ridiculous to suppose that they could be taken seriously.

مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ...

8. We send not the angels down except for just cause:

C1942. Angels are not sent down to satisfy the whim or curiosity of the unbelievers. They are sent to bring inspiration to Allah's messengers and to execute Allah's decrees.

...وَمَا كَانُوا إِذًا مُّنظَرِينَ (٨)

if they came (to the ungodly), behold! no respite would they have!

C1943. If the angels were to appear before the ungodly, it would mean that they came to execute just punishment, and then there would be no hope of respite possible for the ungodly.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (٩)

9. We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).

C1944. The purity of the text of the Quran through fourteen centuries is a foretaste of the eternal care with which Allah's Truth is guarded through all ages.

All corruptions, inventions, and accretions pass away, but Allah's pure and holy Truth will never suffer eclipse even though the whole world mocked at it and were bent on destroying it. (R).

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ فِي شِيَعِ الأَوَّلِينَ (١٠)

10. We did send Messengers before thee amongst the religious sects of old:

C1945. Shiya'un, plural of Shi'atun:: a sect, a religious division.

Mankind sees fragments of Truth at a time, and is apt to fall into fragments and divisions. All true messengers of Allah come to reconcile these fragments or divisions, for they preach the true Gospel of Unity.

So came Al-Mustafa to bring back to Unity the many jarring sects among the Jews, Christians, and Pagans. His mission was held up to ridicule, but so was the mission of his predecessors. Mockery itself should not discourage the preachers of Truth.

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلاَّ كَانُواْ بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (١١)

11. But never came a Messenger to them but they mocked him.

كَذَلِكَ نَسْلُكُهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٢)

12. Even so do We let it creep into the hearts of the sinners --

C1946. If evil and disbelief exist in the world, we must not be impatient or lose our faith. We must recognise that if such things are permitted, they are part of the Universal Plan and purpose of Allah, Who is All-Wise and

All-Good, but Whose wisdom and goodness we cannot fully fathom.

One consolation we have, and that is stated in the next verse and the next note.

لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ...

13. That they should not believe in the (Message);

...وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الأَوَّلِينَ (١٣)

but the ways of the ancients have passed away.

C1947. Sects, divisions, and systems invented by men tend to pass away, but Allah's pure Truth of Unity endures for ever. This we see in history when we study it on a large scale.

Cf. the parable in 14:24-26.

Khalat: I have translated it here in the same sense as in 13:30, 10:102, and other places.

Some Commentators give it a slightly different shade of meaning. The other meaning is seen in 48:23.

وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ ...

14. Even if We opened out to them a gate from heaven,

C1948. Cf. 6:35.

The spiritual kingdom is open to all to enter. But the entrance is not a mere matter of physical movement. It is a question of a total change of heart. Evil must cease to be evil, before it can see or enjoy Good.

If we could suppose Evil, like Bottom the weaver, to be "translated" or in some way carried up to heaven, it would only think that the Truth was an illusion, and the reality was mere witchery. The taint is in its very nature, which must first be purified and rendered fit for the reception of light, truth, and bliss.

... فَظَلُّواْ فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ (١٤)

and they were to continue (all day) ascending therein,

لَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ أَبْصَارُنَا...

15. They would only say:

"Our eyes have been intoxicated:

...بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَّسْحُورُونَ (١٥)

nay, we have been bewitched by sorcery."

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا ....

16. It is We who have set out

C1949. Evil having been described, not as an external thing, but as a taint of the soul, we have in this section a glorious account of the purity and beauty of Allah's Creation.

Evil is a blot on it, not a normal feature of it. Indeed, the normal feature is the guard which Allah has put on it, to protect it from evil.

... فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاظِرِينَ (١٦)

the Zodiacal Signs in the heavens, and made them fair-seeming to (all) beholders;

C1950. In the countless millions of stars in the universe which we see, the first step in our astronomical knowledge is to find marvelous order, beauty, and harmony, on a scale of grandeur which we appreciate more and more as our knowledge increases.

The first broad belt that we distinguish is the Zodiac, which marks the sun's path through the heavens year after year and the limit of the wanderings of the moon and the planets.

We make twelve divisions of it and call them Signs of the Zodiac. Each marks the solar path through the heavens as we see it, month after month. We can thus mark off the seasons in our solar year, and express in definite

laws the most important facts in meteorology, agriculture, seasonal winds, and tides.

Then there are the mansions of the moon, the mapping out of the Constellations, and the other marvelous facts of the heavens, some of which affect our physical life on this earth. But the highest lessons we can draw from them are spiritual.

The author of this wonderful Order and Beauty is One, and He alone is entitled to our worship.

وَحَفِظْنَاهَا ...

17. And (moreover) we have guarded them

C1951. Taking the physical heavens, we can imagine the supreme melody of harmony- guarded from every disturbing force. If by any chance any rebellious force of evil seeks to obtain, by stealth, a sound of that harmony to which all who make themselves constant are freely invited, it is pursued by a shooting star, for there can be no consonance between evil and good.

... مِن كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ (١٧)

from every evil spirit accursed:

C1952. Rajim: driven away with stones, rejected, accursed. Cf. 3:36.

... إِلاَّ مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ

18. But any that gains a hearing by stealth,

C1953. Cf. 72:8-9. [Eds.]

... فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٨)

is pursued by a flaming fire, bright (to see).

C1954. A shooting star. Cf. 37:10.

وَالأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ...

19. And the earth We have spread out (like a carpet); set thereon mountains firm and immovable;

C1955. Majesty, order, beauty and harmony are shown in all Allah's Creation, but especially in the heavens.

Coming nearer to man, Allah's care for man and His goodness are shown (besides His other qualities) in His creation of the earth.

In highly poetical language, the earth is described as spread out like a carpet, on which the hills act as weights to keep it steady.

...وَأَنبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُونٍ (١٩)

and produced therein all kinds of things in due balance.

C1956. And every kind of thing is produced on the earth in due balance and measure.

The mineral kingdom supports the vegetable and they in their turn support the animal, and there is a link of mutual dependence between them.

Excess is eliminated. The waste of one is made the food of another, and vice versa. And this is a chain of gradation and inter-dependence.

...وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ

20. And We have provided therein means of subsistence -- for you

...وَمَن لَّسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرَازِقِينَ (٢٠)

and for those for whose sustenance ye are not responsible.

C1957. See last note.

'We provide sustenance of every kind, physical, mental, spiritual, etc., for you (i.e. for mankind). But We do more. We provide for everyone of Our creatures. And there are those of which mankind is not even cognizant. We provide for them also.

There are those who may at first sight appear hostile to man, or whom man may consider hostile, such as wild and noxious animals. They are Our creatures, and We provide for them also, as they are Our creatures. But there is due order and balance in the economy of Our universal Plan.'

وَإِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ عِندَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ...

21. And there is not a thing but its (sources and) treasures (inexhaustible) are with Us;

C1958. Khaza'in: treasures; store-houses; places where valuable things are accumulated, from which supplies are distributed from time to time as need arises.

...وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلاَّ بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (٢١)

but We only send down thereof in due and ascertainable measures.

C1959. All the wonderful gifts and forces and energies which we see in the world around us have their sources and fountain-heads with Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of the Worlds.

And what we see, or perceive or imagine is just a small portion of what exists. That portion is sent out to us and to our world according to our needs or its needs from time to time as the occasion arises. It is strictly limited according to rule and plan. Its source is unlimited and inexhaustible.

In the same way the forces which we see operating around us, in nature or in the spiritual world, according to laws which we can grasp and, ascertain, are mere derived forces, in the 2nd, 3rd, or nth degree. Their source and ultimate fountain head is with Allah.

... وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَاحَ لَوَاقِحَ

22. And We send the fecundating winds,

C1960. Lawaqih, plural of laqih, from laqaha, to impregnate or fecundate the female date-palm by putting the pollen of the male tree on to the ovaries of the female tree. The date palm is uni-sexual.

The wind performs this office for many flowers. Here, by a bold metaphor, its fecundating quality is transferred to the clouds, which by means of rain produce all kinds of fruit, grain, and vegetation. The clouds as vapour are manipulated by the winds, which set up atmospheric

currents resulting in condensation and the descent of rain.

Note the appropriateness of the little article "then", showing the connection of winds with rain.

... فَأنزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاء...

then cause the rain to descend from the sky,

...فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ (٢٢)

therewith providing you with water (in abundance), though ye are not the guardians of its stores.

C1961. Cf. the previous verse, and n. 1958.

Man may store water in cisterns, tanks, lakes, and head-waters of canals. But he has no control over its original sources, which are the clouds, which by the help of the winds, act as the grand distributors of water over wide spaces of the world's surface.

C1962. This verse must be understood as furnishing an example of illustration of what is said in the last verse.

... وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيِي وَنُمِيتُ

23. And verily, it is We Who give life, and who give death:

C1963. Note how the argument has mounted up from 15:16 onwards to 15:23 -from things most remote from man to things touching his inmost being, and each of them in its own way is a wonderful instance of Allah's glory and goodness, and the beauty, order and harmony of His creation.

- First, the heavens, the zodiacal Signs, the stars , and the mysterious phenomena that we see above us;
- then the earth, and the perfect balance of life and forces therein, with man as an important factor, but not the only factor;
- then, the inexhaustible sources of energy, of which Allah alone is the Provider, but which come to us in measured proportions, as needed; and lastly, Life and Death itself, which will pass away but Allah will remain.

A noble passage, and a fine vindication of Allah's wisdom and providence in dealing with His creatures.

وَنَحْنُ الْوَارِثُونَ (٢٣) ...

it is We Who remain Inheritors (after all else passes away).

C1964. Literally, "We are the Heirs, or Inheritors,"

Cf. 3:180; "To Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth."

See also the latter part of n. 988 to 6:165.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنكُمْ...

24. To Us are known those of you who hasten forward,

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ (٢٤)...

and those who lag behind.

C1965. Cf. 9:100, where the *Sabiqun* may perhaps correspond to the *Mustaqdimin* here. In that case the two classes are those who are the first to accept Faith and do deeds of righteousness and those who come later, but are still numbered with the righteous.

A second alternative meaning may be:

> "those who preceded you in point of time and those who come after you in point of time; they are all known to Allah, and He will gather them all together on the Day of Judgment."

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٥)

25. Assuredly it is thy Lord who will gather them together:
for He is Perfect in Wisdom and Knowledge.

C.120 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(15:26-50)

Man's origin was from dust, lowly;
But his rank was raised above that

Of other creatures because Allah breathed
Into him His spirit. Jealousy and arrogance
Caused the fail of Iblis, the power of Evil:
But no power has Evil o'er those sincere
Souls who worship Allah and seek His Way.
Many are the gates of Evil, but Peace
And dignified joy will be the goal
Of those whom the Grace of Allah has made His own.

Section 3

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنسَانَ مِن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ (٢٦)

26. We created man from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape;

C1966. Salsal.- dry clay which produces a sound, like pottery. Cf. 55:14.

Taking verses 26 and 29 together, I understand the meaning to be:

- that man's body was formed from wet clay molded into shape and then dried until it could emit sound;
- that it was then further fashioned and completed;
- that into the animal form thus fashioned was breathed the spirit from Allah, which gave it a superiority over other Creation: and
- that the order for obeisance was then given.

وَالْجَآنَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن قَبْلُ مِن نَّارِ السَّمُومِ (٢٧)

27. And the Jinn race, We had created before, from the fire of a scorching wind.

C1967. Cf. 6:100 and n. 929.

Hidden or invisible forces are aptly typified as arising "from the fire of scorching winds."

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلاَئِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ (٢٨)

28. Behold! thy Lord said to the angels:

"I am about to create man, from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape;

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُواْ لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ (٢٩)

29. "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him."

C1968. Among other passages where the creation of Adam is referred to, cf. the following;

2:30-39; 7:11-25.

Note that here the emphasis is on three points:

1. the breathing from Allah's spirit into man i.e., the faculty of God-like knowledge and will, which, if rightly used, would give man superiority over other creatures:
2. the origin of evil in arrogance and jealousy on the part of Satan, who saw only the lower side of man (his clay) and failed to see the higher side, the faculty brought in from the spirit of Allah;
3. that this evil only touches those who yield to it, and has no power over Allah's sincere servants, purified by His grace (15:40, 42).

Adam is not here mentioned by name, but only Man, whose symbol is Adam.

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلآئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ (٣٠)

30. So the angels prostrated themselves all of them together:

إِلاَّ ...

31. Not so

C1969. Cf. n. 49 to 2:34.

Iblis:

C1970. Iblis: the name has in it the root-idea of desperateness or rebellion.

Cf. n. 52 to 2:36.

...أَبَى أَن يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ (٣١)

he refused to be among those who prostrated themselves.

C1971. Apparently Iblis's arrogance had two grounds:

- that man was made of clay while he was made of fire;
- that he did not wish to do what others did.

Both grounds were false;

- because man had the spirit of Allah breathed into him;
- because contempt of the angels who obeyed Allah's words showed not Iblis's superiority but his inferiority.

The word "bashar" for man (verse 33) suggests a gross physical body.

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ أَلاَّ تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ (٣٢)

32. (Allah) said: "O Iblis! what is your reason for not being among those who prostrated themselves?"

قَالَ لَمْ أَكُن لِّأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ (٣٣)

33. (Iblis) said:

"I am not one to prostrate myself to man, whom thou didst create from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape."

قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ (٣٤)

34. (Allah) said:

"Then get thee out from here;

for thou art rejected, accursed.

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٣٥)

35. "And the Curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgment."

C1972. After the Day of Judgment the whole constitution of the universe will be different. There will be a new world altogether, on a wholly different plane. (Cf. 21:104).

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (٣٦)

36. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord! give me then respite till the Day the (dead) are raised."

C1973. What was this respite?

The curse on Iblis remained, i.e. he was deprived of Allah's grace and became in the spiritual world what an outlaw is in a political kingdom. An earthly kingdom may not be able to catch and destroy an outlaw. But Allah is Omnipotent, and such power as Iblis may have can only come through the respite granted by Allah. The respite then is what is expressed in 15:39 below.

In Allah's grant of limited free-will to man is implied the faculty of choosing between good and evil, and the faculty is exercised through the temptations and allurements put forward by Satan, "the open enemy" of man. This is for the period of man's probation on this earth.

Even so, no temptations have power over the sincere worshippers of Allah, who are purified by His grace.

قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ (٣٧)

37. (Allah) said: "Respite is granted thee --

إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (٣٨)

38. "Till the Day of the Time Appointed."

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَآ أَغْوَيْتَنِي لأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ...

39. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord! because Thou hast put me in the wrong, I will make (wrong) fair-seeming to them on the earth,

C1974. Agwaitani: 'thrown me out of the way, put me in the wrong': Cf. 7:16.

Satan cannot be straight or truthful even before Allah. By his own arrogance and rebellion he fell; he attributes this to Allah. Between Allah's righteous judgment and Satan's snares and temptations there cannot be the remotest comparison. Yet he presumes to put them on an equal footing. He is taking advantage of the respite.

...وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٣٩)

and I will put them all in the wrong --

C1975. Iblis (the Satan) is powerless against Allah. He turns therefore against man and becomes Satan (the Enemy).

إِلاَّ عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٤٠)

40. "Except Thy servants among them, sincere and purified (by Thy grace)."

قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ (٤١)

41. (Allah) said:

"This (Way of My sincere servants) is indeed a Way that leads straight to Me.

C1976. To be sincere in the worship of Allah is to obtain purification from all stain of evil and exemption from all influence of evil. It changes the whole nature of man. After that, evil cannot touch him. Evil will acknowledge him to be beyond its power and will not even tempt him.

Apart from such purified souls, everyone who worships Allah invites Allah's grace to protect him. But if he puts himself in the way of wrong and deliberately chooses evil, he must take the consequences. The blame is not even on Satan, the power of evil, it is on the sinner himself, who puts himself into his power; 14:22: 15:42.

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ...

42. "For over My servants no authority shalt thou have,

إِلاَّ مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ (٤٢)...

except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow thee."

وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٤٣)

43. And verily, Hell is the promised abode for them all!

لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ...

44. To it are seven Gates:

C1977. The ways of sin are numerous, and if they are classified into seven, each of them points to a Gate that leads to Hell.

لِّكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُومٌ (٤٤)...

for each of those Gates is (special) class (of sinners assigned).

Section 4

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٤٥)

45. The righteous (will be) amid Gardens and fountains (of clear-flowing water).

ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلاَمٍ آمِنِينَ (٤٦)

46. (Their greeting will be): "Enter ye here in Peace and Security."

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنْ غِلٍّ...

47. And We shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury:

C1978. Cf. 7:43, and n. 1021.

The hearts and minds will be so purified that all past rancour, jealousy, or sense of injury will be obliterated. The true Brotherhood will be realized there, when each will have his own dignity, there will be no question of invidious comparisons; each will face the others with joy and confidence. There will be no sense of toil or fatigue, and the joy will last forever.

إِخْوَانًا عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ (٤٧)...

(they will be) brothers (joyfully) facing each other on thrones (of dignity).

لاَ يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ...

48. There no sense of fatigue shall touch them,

وَمَا هُم مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ (٤٨)...

nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave.

نَبِّىءْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٤٩)

49. Tell My servants that I am indeed the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful;

C1979. We must realise both sides of Allah's attributes: His mercy, grace, and forgiveness are unbounded; if we reject all this, His justice and punishment will also be beyond all that we can conceive.

وَ أَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الأَلِيمَ (٥٠)

50. And that My Penalty will be indeed the most grievous Penalty.

C.121 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(15:51-84)

Allah's Grace and Mercy are always
First, But His Justice and Wrath will seize
Those who defy His Law. Even when
The unspeakable crimes of the Cities
Of the Plain made their destruction
Inevitable. Allah's message of Mercy
To mankind was sent to Abraham
And of safety to Lut. The last remnants
Of sin will be cut off, and the Signs

And Tokens thereof are plain for all
To see. The proud Companions of the Wood
And the builders of Rocky Fortresses
Were all swept away because of their sins.

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ عَن ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٥١)

51. Tell them about the guests of Abraham.

C1980. In illustration of the contrasts between Good and Evil, and the consequences that flow from them, we have now a reference to four incidents from the past, viz.

1. an incident from the story of Abraham;
2. from that of Lot, nephew of Abraham, and the end of the Cities of the Plain, which he was sent to warn;
3. the People of the Wood; and
4. the People of the Rocky Tract (Hijr), after whom this Sura is called. As usual, the recital of Allah's abounding grace comes first.

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا...

52. When they entered his presence and said, "Peace!"

...قَالَ إِنَّا مِنكُمْ وَجِلُونَ (٥٢)

He said, "We feel afraid of you!"

C1981. For a full understanding of this reference to the angels who were Abraham's guests and came to announce the birth of a son to him in his old age, read 11:69-73 and n. 1565 to 11:69, and notes 1566-1570.

The appearance of two strangers of uncommon appearance, who refused to partake of the host's sumptuous hospitality, made Abraham at first suspicious and afraid.

قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ (٥٣)

53. They said: "Fear not! we give thee glad tidings of a son endowed with wisdom."

C1982. The birth of a son in old age, to a sonless father was glad tidings to Abraham personally. The birth of a son endowed with wisdom promised something infinitely more.

Considering that the angels were divine messengers, the wisdom referred to was divine wisdom, and the event became an event of prime importance in the world's religious history. For Abraham became, through his progeny, the root of the three great universal religions, diffused throughout the world.

قَالَ أَبَشَّرْتُمُونِي عَلَى أَن مَّسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ...

54. He said: "Do ye give me glad tidings that old age has seized me?

...فَبِمَ تُبَشِّرُونَ (٥٤)

Of what, then, is your good news?"

قَالُواْ بَشَّرْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلاَ تَكُن مِّنَ الْقَانِطِينَ (٥٥)

55. They said: "We give thee glad tidings in truth:

be not then in despair!"

قَالَ وَمَن يَقْنَطُ مِن رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلاَّ الضَّآلُّونَ (٥٦)

56. He said:

"And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?"

C1983. Cf. 11:69. [Eds.].

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٥٧)

57. Abraham said:

"What then is the business on which ye (have come), O ye messengers (of Allah)?"

C1984. When cordial understanding was established between Abraham and his guests and probably when the guests were about to depart, Abraham put a question to them:

"What is the mission on which you are going?"

It was further implied:

"Is there anything I can do to help?"

But no. The mission was one of Punishment for abominable sins. Note that the mention of Allah's Wrath is always linked with that of Allah's Mercy, and the Mercy comes first. The same angels that came to punish Sodom and Gomorrah were charged first to give the good news of Allah's Mercy to Abraham in the shape of a long line of Teachers of Righteousness.

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ (٥٨)

58. They said:

"We have been sent to a people (deep) in sin.

C1985. The Cities of the Plain round the Dead Sea, which to this day is called the Bahr Lut. They were given to unspeakable abominations.

Read in this connection 11:77-83 and notes.

إِلاَّ آلَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٥٩)

59. "Excepting the adherents of Lut: them we are certainly (charged) to save (from harm) -- all --

C1986. Here, again, Allah's saving Grace is linked with His Wrath, and is mentioned first.

إِلاَّ امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَّرْنَا إِنَّهَا لَمِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ (٦٠)

60. "Except his wife, who, we have ascertained, will be among those who will lag behind."

C1987. See 11:81, and n. 1577.

Section 5

فَلَمَّا جَاء آلَ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٦١)

61. At length when the messengers arrived among the adherents of Lut,

C1988. Al means people who adhere to the ways and teaching of a great Teacher; e.g., ***Ali Muhammad***: it does not necessarily mean race or descendants.

Ahl (15:65 below) usually implies "household" but may be taken in an extended sense to include People generally, see 15:67.

Qaum (15:62) may be any collection or aggregate of people. In 11:70 the hostile inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain are called the qaum-u-Lut (the People of Lut).

Ashab (companions) refers to a Group rather than to a People-. Cf. 15:78. (R).

قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّنكَرُونَ (٦٢)

62. He said: "Ye appear to be uncommon folk."

قَالُواْ بَلْ جِئْنَاكَ بِمَا كَانُواْ فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ (٦٣)

63. They said: "Yea, we have come to thee to accomplish that of which they doubt.

C1989. The unusual appearance of the angels struck Lut as it had struck Abraham. Knowing the abominable vices to which the Cities were addicted, he feared to entertain handsome young men.

They at once disclosed their mission to him. In effect they said:

> "You, Lut, have been preaching in vain to these wicked Cities. When you warn them of their inevitable end: Destruction, they laugh and doubt. Now their doubt will be resolved. Their destruction will be accomplished before the morning."

وَأَتَيْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ (٦٤)

64. "We have brought to thee that which is inevitably due, and assuredly we tell the truth.

C1990. Al-Haqq: the Punishment which is justly and inevitably due, which must certainly come to pass.

Cf. 22:18.

فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ أَدْبَارَهُمْ...

65. "Then travel by night with thy household, when a portion of the night (yet remains), and do thou bring up the rear:

...وَلاَ يَلْتَفِتْ مِنكُمْ أَحَدٌ وَامْضُواْ حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ (٦٥)

let no one amongst you look back, but pass on whither ye are ordered."

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ الأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ هَؤُلاء مَقْطُوعٌ مُّصْبِحِينَ (٦٦)

66. And We made known this decree to him, that the last remnants of those (sinners) should be cut off by the morning.

C1991. As the last remnants of the wicked were to be cut off, and as the Mercy of Allah wished to save every true soul who might be with Lut, Allah's decree was made known to Lut, so that he might save his adherents.

وَجَاء أَهْلُ الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٦٧)

67. The inhabitants of the City came in (mad) joy (at news of the young men).

C1992. They were addicted to unnatural crime, and the news of the advent of handsome young men inflamed them. How true it is that at the very verge of destruction, men rush blindly to their fate, and cut off any last hope of repentance and mercy for themselves.

Cf. 15:72 below.

قَالَ إِنَّ هَؤُلاء ضَيْفِي فَلاَ تَفْضَحُونِ (٦٨)

68. Lut said:

"These are my guests: disgrace me not:

وَاتَّقُوا اللّهَ وَلاَ تُخْزُونِ (٦٩)

69. "But fear Allah, and shame me not."

قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٠)

70. They said: "Did we not forbid thee (to speak) for all and sundry?"

C1993. 1 understand the meaning to be that Lut, the only righteous man in the City, had frequently remonstrated with the inhabitants against their unnatural crimes, and they had forbidden him to speak to them again on behalf of any one, "as if" (they might tauntingly say) "he was the protector of all and sundry".

Some Commentators understand the verse to mean: 'Did we not forbid thee to entertain any strangers?'

قَالَ هَؤُلاء بَنَاتِي إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (٧١)

71. He said: "There are my daughters (to marry). If ye must act (so)."

C1994. Cf. 11:78, n. 1575.

"My daughters" in the mouth of a venerable man may mean young girls of the City, which would be appropriate considering the large number of men who came to besiege Lot's house.

لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (٧٢)

72. Verily, by thy life (O Prophet), in their wild intoxication, they wander in distraction, to and fro.

C1995. The wild, mad fury of passion and sin attains its own destruction and cuts off the last hope of repentance or mercy.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِينَ (٧٣)

73. But the (mighty) **Blast** overtook them before morning,

C1996. As-Saihat: the mighty Blast, is mentioned as accompanying earthquakes:

Cf. 11:67-94. Here it was the violent wind and noise accompanying the shower of brimstones, possibly with some volcanic action.

فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ (٧٤)

74. And We turned (the Cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay.

C1997. Cf. 11:82 and notes, in which the word **Sijjil** and its origin are explained.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ (٧٥)

75. Behold! in this are Signs for those who by tokens do understand.

وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ (٧٦)

76. And the (cities were) right on the highroad.

C1998. The Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed, and even their precise position cannot be identified. But the brimstone plain of the tract still exists, right on the highway between Arabia and Syria.

To the traveler in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea the whole locality presents a scene of dismal desolation which truly suggests the awful punishment for unspeakable crimes.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٧٧)

77. Behold! in this is a Sign for those who believe!

C1999. Verse 75 refers to all who have the intelligence to grasp the Signs of Allah.

Verses 76-77 specially refer to those who use the Arabia-Syria highroad. The desolation is specially brought home to them,

وَإِن كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ لَظَالِمِينَ (٧٨)

78. And the Companions of the Wood were also wrongdoers;

C2000. "Companions of the Wood": Ashab ul Aykah. Perhaps Aykah is after all a proper noun, the name of a town or tract.

Who were the Companions of the Aykah?

They are mentioned four times in the Quran, viz., here, and in 26:176-191; 38:13; and 50:14.

The only passage in which any details are given is 26:176-191. There we are told that their Prophet was Shu'aib, and other details given correspond to those of the Madyan, to whom Shu'aib was sent as Prophet-,

see 7:85-93. In my notes to that passage I have discussed the question of Shu'aib and the Madyan people. It is reasonable to suppose that the Companions of the Wood were either the same as the Madyan, or a Group among them or in their neighbourhood.

فَانتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمَا لَبِإِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ (٧٩)

79. So We exacted retribution from them.

They were both on an open highway, plain to see.

C2001. Both: i.e., The Cities of the Plain and the Companions of the Aykah.

Section 6

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٨٠)

80. The Companions of the Rocky Tract also rejected the messengers:

C2002. "The Rocky Tract": is undoubtedly a geographical name.

On the maps of Arabia will be found a tract called the Hijr, north of Madinah, Jabal Hijr is about 150 miles north of Madinah. The tract would fall on the highway to Syria.

This was the country of the Thamud For them and the country see 7:73, n. 1043.

وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ آيَاتِنَا فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ (٨١)

81. We sent them Our Signs, but they persisted in turning away from them.

وَكَانُوا يَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا آمِنِينَ (٨٢)

82. Out of the mountains did they hew (their) edifices, (feeling themselves) secure.

C2003. Remains of these rock edifices in the Hijr are still found, and the City of Petra is not more than 380 miles from Jabal Hijr. See 7:73, n. 1043.

"Petra" in Greek means "Rock". For the Inscriptions found there, and their significance, see Appendix VII to Surah 26.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِينَ (٨٣)

83. But the (mighty) Blast seized them of a morning,

C2004. The mighty rumbling noise and wind accompanying an earthquake.

See 7:78, n. 1047.

فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٨٤)

84. And of no avail to them was all that they did (with such art and care)!

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلاَّ بِالْحَقِّ...

85. We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, but for just ends.

C2005. Allah's Creation is all for a true, just, and righteous purpose. Cf. 10:5.

It is not for mere whim or sport. 21:16.

...وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لآتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ (٨٥)

And the Hour is surely coming (when this will be manifest). So overlook (any human faults) with gracious forgiveness.

C2006. The Hour will not be long delayed when the true Design and Pattern of Life will be manifest. We must not be impatient, if there appear to be, to our limited vision, apparent injustices. We must bear and forbear, and as far as our own personal feelings are concerned, we must overlook other people's faults with "a gracious forgiveness".

C.122 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(15:85-99)

But Allah's Creation doth bear witness
To Allah's Design and Mercy. His Plan
Is sure. His gift of the glorious Quran
Is more than any worldly goods can be.
So, while we denounce Sin openly,
Let us be gentle and kind, and adore
And serve our Lord all our lives.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨٦)

86. For verily it is thy Lord Who is the Master-Creator, knowing all things.

C2007. Khallaq: the emphatic intensive form, as meaning the Creator, Who is perfect in His skill and knowledge, and Whose creation answers perfectly to His design. Therefore no one should think that anything has gone wrong in Allah's creation.

What may seem out of joint is merely the result of our short-sighted standards. It often happens that what appears to us to be evil or imperfect or unjust is a reflection of our own imperfect minds.

See the next two verses and notes.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ (٨٧)

87. And We have bestowed upon thee the Seven Oft-Repeated (verses) and the Grand Qur'án.

C2008. The Seven Oft-repeated Verses are usually understood to be the Opening Surah, the Fatihah. They sum up the whole teaching of the Quran.

What can be a more precious gift to a Muslim than the glorious Quran or any Surah of it?

Worldly wealth, honour, possessions, or anything else, sinks into insignificance in comparison with it.

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ ...

88. Strain not thine eyes (wistfully) at what We have bestowed on certain classes of them,

C2009. It may be that other people have worldly goods which worldly men envy. Do they necessarily bring happiness?

Even the temporary pleasure that they may give is not unmixed with spiritual poisons, and even so, will not last. The man of God looks with wistful eyes at other things,- the favour and countenance of Allah.

... وَلاَ تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ...

nor grieve over them:

C2010. The Prophet of Allah, in his human love and sympathy, may grieve over certain classes of people who are puffed up with false notions and callous to the Message of Allah. But he should not make himself unhappy. There is no flaw in Allah's Plan, and it must prevail.

This was addressed in the first instance to Al-Mustafa, but in a minor degree, it applies to all righteous men. (R).

...وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨٨)

but lower thy wing (in gentleness) to the Believers.

C2011. The metaphor is from a bird who lowers her wing in tender solicitude for her little ones.

Cf. 17:24, where it is applied to "lowering the wing" to aged parents.

وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ (٨٩)

89. And say: "I am indeed he that warneth openly and without ambiguity" --

C2012. In the ministry of Al-Mustafa there was no mincing of matters, no compromises with evil. Evil was denounced in unambiguous terms.

Mubin implies both openness and clearness, i.e. freedom from ambiguity.

كَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَى الْمُقْتَسِمِينَ (٩٠)

90. (Of just such wrath) as We sent down on those who divided (Scripture into arbitrary parts) -

C2013. The Commentators differ as to the precise significance of verses 90 and 91.

Are the persons referred to in the two verses the same, or different?

And who were they?

I adopt the view, for which there is good authority, that the two classes of persons were different but similar. Verse 90, I think refers to the Jews and Christians, who took out of Scripture what suited them, and ignored or rejected the rest: 2:85, 101.

For verse 91 see next note.

الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ (٩١)

91. (So also on such) as have made the Qur'án into shreds (as they please).

C2014. The Makkan Pagans, in the early days of Islam, in order to dishonour and ridicule the Quran, divided what was so far revealed, into bits, and apportioned them to people coming on pilgrimage to Makkah by different routes, slandering and abusing the Prophet of Allah.

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَسْأَلَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٩٢)

92. Therefore, by thy Lord, We will, of a surety, call them to account,

عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٩٣)

93. For all their deeds.

C2015. Those who ridicule Scripture in any form will all be called to account for their insolence, for they are all alike.

فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٩٤)

94. Therefore expound openly what thou art commanded, and turn away from those who join false gods with Allah.

إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ (٩٥)

95. For sufficient are We unto thee against those who scoff --

C2016. If the whole world is ranged against the Prophet of Allah, as was -at one time the case with the Prophet, and scoffs at all that is sacred, the sense of Allah's presence and protection outweighs all.

And after all, the scoffers are creatures of a day. Soon will they find their level, and be undeceived as to all their falsehoods. But the Truth of Allah endures forever. (R).

الَّذِينَ يَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَـهًا آخَرَ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٩٦)

96. Those who adopt, with Allah, another god: but soon will they come to know.

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ (٩٧)

97. We do indeed know how thy heart is distressed at what they say.

C2017. Literally, 'that thy breast is constrained.'

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُن مِّنَ السَّاجِدِينَ (٩٨)

98. But celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and be of those who prostrate themselves in adoration.

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ (٩٩)

99. And serve thy Lord until there come unto thee the Hour that is certain.

C2018. Yaqin: Certainty; the Hour that is Certain; death.

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَن نَّقُولَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ

Verily! Our Word unto a thing when We intend it, is only that We say unto it; "Be!"; and it is.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Nahl

النَّحْل

Introduction and Summary

Chronologically this Surah, like the six which preceded it, belongs to the late Makkan period, except perhaps verse 110 and some of the verses that follow. But the chronology has no significance.

In subject matter it sums up, from a new point of view, the arguments on the great questions of Allah's dealings with man. His Self-revelation to man, and how the Messengers and the Message are writ large in every phase of Allah's Creation and the life of Man. The new point of view is that Nature points to Nature's God.

Summery- Everything in Creation proclaims the glory of Allah. To man is given dominion over Nature, that man may recognise Allah's Unity and Allah's Truth (16:1-25, and C. 123).

Man should never lose sight of his goal, which is the good, or dispute with the great Teachers, who are sent to all Peoples, to bring about Unity: all creatures serve Allah (16:26-50, and C. 124).

Allah's favours and man's ingratitude recounted. His Signs in the rain-bearing clouds, the cattle that give milk, the bee that produces honey, the wonderful relations of family and social life, and the refinements and comforts of civilisation (16:51-83, and C. 125).

The Messengers of Truth will bear witness against those who reject the Truth. Allah will judge us according to our faith and deeds (16:84-100, and C. 126).

The Quran is true: it guides and gives glad tidings. Believe, and make the most of life in all things good and lawful. Follow the example of Abraham; be true in Faith and righteousness, and do good (16:101-128, and C. 127).

C.123 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(16:1-25)

Allah's Command must inevitably
Come to pass. But all His Creation
Proclaims His glory, and leads to His Truth.
In all things has He furnished man
With favours innumerable.
To lead and guide him and bring him
To Himself. Why then does man
Refuse the Truth, except for arrogance?
Why does he run after false gods,
Thus acting against his own lights
And misleading others less blest in knowledge?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَتَى أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلاَ تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ...

1. (Inevitable) cometh (to pass) the Command of Allah: seek ye not then to hasten it:

C2019. This is an answer to the taunt of the Pagans, who said; "If there is a god, the One True God, as you say, with unified control, why does He not punish the wrong- doers at once?"

The answer is;

"The decree of Allah will inevitably come to pass; it will come soon enough; when it comes, you will wish it were delayed; how foolish of you to wish even to cut off your last hope of forgiveness?"

... سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (١)

glory to Him,

and far is He above having the partners they ascribe unto Him!

يُنَزِّلُ الْمَلآئِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ...

2. He doth send down His angels with inspiration of His Command, to such of His servants as He pleaseth, (saying):

... أَنْ أَنذِرُواْ أَنَّهُ لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ أَنَاْ فَاتَّقُونِ (٢)

"Warn (Man) that there is no god but I:

so do your duty unto Me."

C2020. The Pagans, with their multiplicity of gods and goddesses, good and evil, could play one off against another. That is mere mockery of religion. With such conceptions, man cannot understand the Unity of Design in the Universe nor realise the Power and Glory of the One True God, to Whom alone worship and service are due.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ...

3. He has created the heavens and the earth for just ends:

C2021. Not for sport, or fortuitously and without Design.

Cf. 15:85.

Surely the Unity of Design in Creation also proves the Unity of Allah their Creator.

... تَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٣)

far is He above having the partners they ascribe to Him!

خَلَقَ الإِنسَانَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ (٤)

4. He has created man from a sperm drop;

and behold this same (man) becomes an open disputer!

C2022. Man's physical origin is lowly. Yet do men go back to material things, and neglect or dispute about the highest things in Life.

وَالأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ ...

5. And cattle He has created for you (men):

C2023. Why will you go back to material things, considering that material things are made subservient to your use and enjoyment in various ways as suggested in the clauses that follow.

... فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ...

from them ye derive warmth, and numerous benefits,

C2024. From wool, and hair, and skins, and milk.

Camel's hair makes warm robes and blankets; and certain kinds of goats yield hair which makes similar fabrics.

Sheep yield wool, and Ilamas alpaca for similar uses. The skins and furs of many animals yield warm raiment or make warm rugs or bedding.

The females of many of these animals yield good warm milk, a nourishing and wholesome diet. Then the flesh of many of these animals is good to eat.

There are other uses, which the animals serve, and which are referred to later.

... وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٥)

and of their (meat) ye eat.

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ (٦)

6. And ye have a sense of pride and beauty in them as ye drive them home in the evening, and as ye lead them forth to pasture in the morning.

C2025. The good man is proud of his cattle and is good to them. As they go to, and return from, pasture, morning and evening, he has a sense of his power and wealth and their beauty and docility.

Will not man turn from these material facts to the great spiritual truths and purpose behind them?

وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَى بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بَالِغِيهِ إِلاَّ بِشِقِّ الأَنفُسِ...

7. And they carry your heavy loads to lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with souls distressed:

C2026. The cattle and animals also carry loads, and thus make inter-communication between different lands easy. But for them there would have been many difficulties, not only physical, but psychological.

Weary men carrying loads are in no mood for social and spiritual intercourse. This intercourse is made possible by the kindness and mercy of Allah.

... إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٧)

for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful.

وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً...

8. And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show;

C2027. Horse, mules, and donkeys as well as other animals may be beasts of burden, but they may also be pedigree animals bred for beauty and for all those more refined uses, such as processions, in which grace and elegance is the predominant feature.

... وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨)

and He has created (other) things of what ye have no knowledge.

C2028. If we examine the history of transport, there have been vast changes through the ages, from rude pack animals to fine equipages, and then through mechanical contrivances, such means of transport as elegant coaches, tramways and railways, useful motor lorries and Rolls-Royce cars, and air-ships and aeroplanes of all descriptions.

At any given point of time, many of these were yet unknown to man. Nor can we suppose the limit to have been reached now or that it will ever be reached at any future time.

Through the mind and ingenuity of man it is Allah that creates new things hitherto unknown to man.

وَعَلَى اللّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ وَمِنْهَا جَآئِرٌ...

9. And unto Allah leads straight the Way, but there are ways that turn aside:

C2029. Through material things "the Way" does always lead to Allah. But some minds are so obsessed with material things that they miss the pointers to the spiritual.

Allah could have forced all to the true Way, but in His Will and Plan is the training of man's will, and that is done by the Signs in nature and Revelation.

... وَلَوْ شَاء لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٩)

if Allah had willed, He could have guided all of you.

Section 2

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء...

10. It is He Who sends down rain from the sky:

... لَّكُم مِّنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ (١٠)

from it ye drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which ye feed your cattle.

يُنبِتُ لَكُم بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالأعْنَابَ وَمِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ...

11. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes, and every kind of fruit:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (١١)

verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought.

C2030. The least thought and study of nature will show you Allah's wise and benign Providence in making the processes of nature subserve man's use and refined life.

A higher degree of intelligence and study is required ("men who are wise") to understand Allah's Signs to man in the processes connected with the heavenly bodies (verse 12).

And a still higher spiritual understanding ("men who celebrate His praises" with gratitude) to realise the marvelous gradations, colours, and nuances in the creatures on this little globe of ours (verse 13), Reason this out carefully.

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

12. He has made subject to you the Night and the Day;

the Sun and the Moon;

C2031. The Night and the Day are caused by astronomical rotations.

What is important for man to note is how Allah has given intelligence to man to make use of this alternation for work and rest;

how man can, as soon as he rises from the primitive stage, get over their inequalities by artificial illuminants, such as vegetable or mineral oils, coal, gas, or electricity, which ultimately are derived from the stored-up energy of the sun;

how the sun's heat can be tempered by various artificial means and can be stored up for use by man as required, how man can be independent of the tides caused by the moon and the sun, which formerly controlled navigation,

but which no longer stand in man's way, with his artificial harbours and great sea-going ships, how navigation was formerly subject to direct observation of the Polar Star and other stars, but how the magnetic needle and charts have now completely altered the position, and man can calculate and to a certain extent control magnetic variations, etc.

In such ways the sun, the moon, and the stars themselves become useful servants to him, all by Allah's gift and His Command, without which there would have been no laws governing them and no intelligence to make use of them.

... وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ...

and the Stars are in subjection by His Command:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٢)

verily in this are Signs for men who are wise.

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ...

13. And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities):

C2032. Whose heart has not been moved by the glorious gradation of colours in the sunset clouds?

The gradations are infinite, and it is only the eye of an artist that can express their collective beauty. They are but a type of the infinite variety and gradation of qualities in the spiritual sphere even in the little space of our own globe.

The big things that can be measured and defined have been spoken of before. Here we have mention of the subtle nuances in the spiritual world which can only be perceived by men who are so high in spiritual insight that their only reaction is to "cerebrate the praises of Allah" in gratitude for His infinite Mercies.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ (١٣)

verily in this is a Sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude).

C2033. Read again n. 2030 above, and see how subtly we are led up from the perception of the big to the perception of the subtle and delicate colours and qualities in the spiritual world.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ ...

14. It is He Who has made the sea subject,

C2034. We have gone up in a climax of material things from the big to the subtle in the sky and the earth. Here we have another climax as regard the things of the sea.

We get the delicate flesh of fishes and marine creatures of all kinds; we get the treasures of the deep; pearls, coral, amber, and things of that kind; and we have the stately ships ploughing the waves, for maritime commerce and intercourse, for unifying mankind, and for realising the spiritual bounty of Allah which can best be expressed by the boundless ocean.

... لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا...

that ye may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender,

C2035. Connoisseurs know the delicate flavours of sea fish, such as the pomfret of the Indian Ocean, the herring of the North Atlantic, the mullet of Marseilles, and many another kind. Tart, translated "fresh and tender," also refers to the soft moist nature of fresh fish.

It is another wonder of Allah that salt water should produce flesh or such fresh, tender, and delicate flavour.

... وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا...

and that ye may extract therefrom ornaments to wear;

C2036. Diving for pearls-in both the primitive and the more advanced form-is another instance of man's power over apparently inaccessible depths of the sea.

... وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيهِ...

and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves,

... وَلِتَبْتَغُواْ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٤)

that ye may seek (thus) of the bounty of Allah and that ye may be grateful.

C2037. After the material benefits which we get from the sea, we are asked to consider things of higher import to the spirit of man.

There is the beautiful ship which stands as the symbol of international commerce and intercourse, things that may be of material benefit, but which have a higher aspect in unifying man and making his civilisation more universal. These are first steps in seeking of the "bounty of Allah" through the sea.

But there are higher aspects. Navigation and international intercourse increase knowledge, which in its higher aspects should clean the mind and make it fitter to approach Allah. The salt water, which covers nearly 72 percent, of the surface of the Globe, is itself a purifying and sanitary agent, and is a good symbol of the higher bounties of Allah, which are as boundless as the Ocean.

وَأَلْقَى فِي الأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ...

15. And He has set up on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you;

C2038. Cf. 13:3 and 15:19.

Here and elsewhere the earth is spoken of as a spacious carpet beneath our feet and the hills as a steadying agent to keep the carpet from rolling or shaking about.

In 78:7 they are spoken of as pegs or stakes. (R).

... وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلاً لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٥)

and rivers and roads; that ye may guide yourselves,

C2039. In this passage (16:15-16) we have the metaphor of the fixed mountains further allegorized.

In these verses the key-words are indicated by the symbols for man's Guidance **(tahtadun)**.

- First, the physical symbols are indicated; the mountains that stand firm and do not change from

day to day in the landscape, unlike shifting sand-dunes, or the coast line of the sea, or rivers and streams, which frequently change their courses, then we have rivers and roads, which are more precise and therefore more useful, though less permanent;

- then we have 'alamat (sign-posts), any kinds of signs erected by man, like direction posts, light-houses or beacons, or provided in nature, as tall trees, etc.;
- and finally, we have the pole-star, and now the magnetic needle, with its variations marked on navigation charts.

All these are symbols for the higher Guidance which Allah provides for the spirit of man. See next note.

وَعَلَامَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ (١٦)

16. And marks and signposts; and by the stars (men) guide themselves.

C2040. See last note.

Let us examine the completed allegory. As there are beacons, landmarks and signs to show the way to men on the earth, so in the spiritual world. And it is ultimately Allah Who provides them, and this is His crowning Mercy.

Like the mountains there are spiritual Landmarks in the missions of the Great Prophets: they should guide us, or teach us, to guide ourselves, and not shake hither and thither like a ship without a rudder or people without Faith.

As rivers and streams mark out their channels, smoothing out levels so we have wholesome Laws and Customs established, to help us in out lives.

Then we have the examples of Great Men as further sign-posts: "Lives of great men all remind us, We can make our lives sublime."

In long-distance travel, the pole-star and the magnetic needle are our guides; so in our long-distance journey to the other world, we have ultimately to look to heavenly guidance or its reflection in Allah's Revelation.

أَفَمَن يَخْلُقُ كَمَن لاَّ يَخْلُقُ أَفَلا تَذَكَّرُونَ (١٧)

17. Is then He Who creates like one that creates not?
Will ye not receive admonition?

C2041. The supreme majesty of Allah have been set out in His favours of all kinds, it will be seen at once that the worship of any other than Allah is meaningless and ridiculous.

Shall we not take the hint and understand?

وَإِن تَعُدُّواْ نِعْمَةَ اللّهِ لاَ تُحْصُوهَا...

18. If ye would count up the favors of Allah, never would ye be able to number them:

... إِنَّ اللّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٨)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C2042. Of all Allah's favours innumerable, His Mercy and Forgiveness in the spiritual plane is the greatest, and of eternal value to us in our future Lives.

وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ (١٩)

19. And Allah doth know what ye conceal, and what ye reveal.

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ لاَ يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ (٢٠)

20. Those whom they invoke besides Allah create nothing and are themselves created.

C2043. Allah is the only Creator and the Ultimate Reality. Everything else is created by Him, and reflects His glory. How foolish then to worship any other than Allah!

أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاء...

21. (They are things) dead, lifeless:

... وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ (٢١)

nor do thy know when they will be raised up.

C2044. Idols are dead wood or stone. If men worship stars, or heroes, or prophets, or great men, they too have no life except that which was given by Allah.

In themselves, they are lifeless. If they worship figments of the imagination, they are reflections in a double degree, and have no life in themselves.

All these things will be raised up on the Last Day, in order that false worshippers may be confronted with them. But they themselves cannot tell when that Day will be.

Section 3

إِلَـٰهُكُمْ إِلَـٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

22. Your Allah is One Allah:

... فَالَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مُّنكِرَةٌ وَهُم مُّسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٢٢)

as to those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts refuse to know and they are arrogant.

C2045. Everything points to Allah, the One True Eternal God. If so, there is a Hereafter, for He has declared it.

In so far as people do not believe this, the fault is in their Will; they do not wish to believe, and the motive behind is arrogance, the sin which brought about the fall of Iblis: 2:34. (R).

لاَ جَرَمَ أَنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ...

23. Undoubtedly Allah doth know what they conceal, and what they reveal:

C2046. Cf. 16:19, where the same words refer to man generally.

Whether he conceals or reveals what is in his heart, Allah knows it, and as Allah is Oft-Forgiving. Most Merciful, His grace is available as His highest favour if man will take it.

Here the reference is to those who "refuse to know", who reject Allah's guidance out of arrogance. Allah **"loveth not the arrogant"**. Such men deprive themselves of Allah's grace.

... إِنَّهُ لاَ يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ (٢٣)

verily He loveth not the arrogant.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُم مَّاذَا أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ...

24. When it is said to them, "What is it that your Lord has revealed?"

C2047. When the arrogant Unbelievers are referred to some definite argument or illustration from Scripture, they dismiss it contemptuously with the remark. **"Tales of the ancients!"**

In this, they are not only playing with their own conscience, but misleading others, with perhaps less knowledge than themselves.

... قَالُواْ أَسَاطِيرُ الأَوَّلِينَ (٢٤)

They say, "Tales of the ancients!"

لِيَحْمِلُواْ أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

25. Let them bear, on the Day of Judgment, their own burdens in full,

... وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّونَهُم بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

and also (something) of the burdens of those without knowledge, whom they misled.

C2048. Their responsibility or crime is twofold:

- that they rejected Allah's Message, and
- that they misled others.

Their Penalty will also be double.

In 6:164, we are told that "no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another".

This is against the doctrine of vicarious atonement. Every man is responsible for his own sins; but the sin of misleading others is a sin of the misleader himself, and he must suffer the penalty for that also, without relieving those misled, of their responsibility.

... أَلاَ سَاء مَا يَزِرُونَ (٢٥)

Alas, how grievous the burdens they will bear!

C.124 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)
(16:26-50)

In all ages wicked men tried to plot
Against Allah's Way, but they never
Succeeded, and were covered with shame
In ways unexpected. The righteous
See good in Allah's Word, and their goal
Is the Good. Great Teachers were sent
To all nations, to warn against Evil
And guide to the Right. The penalty
For evil comes in many unexpected
Ways, for Evil is against Nature.
And all Nature proclaims Allah's Glory
And humbly serves Him, the Lord Supreme.

Section 4

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

26. Those before them did also plot (against Allah's Way):

... فَأَتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُم مِّنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ...

but Allah took their structures from their foundations,

... فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِن فَوْقِهِمْ...

and the roof fell down on them from above;

... وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٦)

and the Wrath seized them from directions they did not perceive.

C2049. Evil will always devise plots against the Prophets of Allah. So was it with Al-Mustafa, and so was it with the Prophets before him. But the imposing structures which the ungodly build up (metaphorically) collapse at

the Command of Allah, and they are often punished from quarters from which they least expected punishment.

For example, the Quraish were confident in their numbers, their organizations, and their superior equipment. But on the field of Badr they collapsed where they expected victory.

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُخْزِيهِمْ...

27. Then, on the Day of Judgment, He will cover them with shame,

... وَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَآئِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تُشَاقُّونَ فِيهِمْ...

and say: "Where are My 'partners' concerning whom ye used to dispute (with the godly)?"

... قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْعِلْمَ ...

Those endued with knowledge will say:

C2050. The worshippers of false gods (ungodly, the Unbelievers) will be unable to reply when brought before the Judgment Seat.

The comment of those **"endued with knowledge"** -the Prophets and Teachers whom they had rejected- will be by way of indictment and explanation of the position of those before the Judgment Seat.

... إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ وَالسُّوءَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٢٧)

"This Day, indeed, are the Unbelievers covered with Shame and Misery -

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلآئِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِمْ...

28. "(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of wrongdoing to their own souls.

C2051. That is, those who died in a state of *Kufr*, or rebellion against Allah, which was really wrong-doing against their own souls.

... فَأَلْقَوُاْ السَّلَمَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِن سُوءٍ...

Then would they offer submission (with the pretence), 'We did no evil (knowingly).'"

C2052. The excuse is a mere pretence. At first they were too dazed to reply. When they reply, they cannot deny the facts, but resort to the sinner's excuse of saying that they sinned through ignorance, and that their motives were not wrong.

Such a plea raises a question of hidden thoughts which are difficult to appraise before a human tribunal. But here they are before their Divine Author, Who knows every secret of their souls, and before Whom no false plea can be of any value. So they are condemned.

... بَلَى إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٨)

(The angels will reply),

"Nay, but verily Allah knoweth all that ye did;

...فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا

29. "So enter the gates of Hell, to dwell therein.

... فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٢٩)

Thus evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant."

...وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ

30. To the righteous (when) it is said, "What is it that your Lord has revealed?"

C2053. The contrast and parallelism is with 16:24, where the ungodly in their levity and their deliberate rejection of guidance find no profit from Allah's Revelation.

... قَالُوا خَيْرًا...

they say, "All that is good."

... لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ...

To those who do good, there is good in this world,

... وَلَدَارُ الآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ...

and the Home of the Hereafter is even better.

C2054. Unlike the ungodly, the good find good everywhere, -in this world and in the Hereafter; because they understand and are in accord with the truths around them.

... وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٠)

And excellent indeed is the Home of the righteous --

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ...

31. Gardens of Eternity which they will enter:
beneath them flow (pleasant) rivers:

... لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَآؤُونَ...

they will have therein all that they wish:

... كَذَلِكَ يَجْزِي اللّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٣١)

thus doth Allah reward the righteous --

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلآئِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ...

32. (Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of purity,

C2055. In a state of purity: from the evils of this world, from want of faith and want of grace. Purity from such evil is the mark of true Islam, and those who die in such purity will be received into Felicity with a salutation of Peace.

... يَقُولُونَ سَلامٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٢)

saying (to them),
"Peace be on you; enter ye the Garden, because of the good which ye did (in the world)."

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلاَّ أَن تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ...

33. Do the (ungodly) wait until the angels come to them, or there comes the Command of thy Lord (for their doom)?

C2056. That is, until death comes to them, or some Punishment in this life, itself, which precludes them from repentance, and the Mercy of Allah.

... كَذَٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

So did those who went before them.

... وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَـٰكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٣٣)

But Allah wronged them not:

nay, they wronged their own souls.

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (٣٤)

34. But the evil results of their deeds overtook them, and that very (Wrath) at which they had scoffed hemmed them in.

Section 5

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِن دُونِهِ مِن شَيْءٍ ...

35. The worshippers of false gods say:

"If Allah had so willed, we should not have worshipped aught but Him --

... نَّحْنُ وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا ...

neither we nor our fathers --

C2057. The old-old argument: if Allah is All-Powerful, why did He not force all persons to His Will?

This ignores the limited Free-will granted to man, which is the whole basis of Ethics. Allah gives man every opportunity of knowing and understanding things, but He does not force him, for that would be against the whole Plan on which our present Life is constituted.

... وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا مِن دُونِهِ مِن شَيْءٍ...

nor should we have prescribed prohibitions other than His."

C2058. The Pagan Arabs prescribed various arbitrary prohibitions in the matter of meat; see 6:143-145.

These, of course, are not recognised by Islam, which also removed some of the restrictions of the Jewish Law; 6:146. The general meaning, however, is far wider.

Men erect their own taboos and prohibitions, barriers and restrictions, and ascribe them to Religion. This is wrong, and more consonant with Pagan practice than with Islam.

... كَذَٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

So did those who went before them.

... فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلاَّ الْبَلاغُ الْمُبِينُ (٣٥)

But what is the mission of Messengers but to preach the Clear Message?

C2059. Clear Message: Mubin: in three senses;

- a Message clear and unambiguous;
- one that makes all things clear to those who try to understand, because it accords with their own nature as created by Allah;
- one preached openly and to everyone.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولاً أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ...

36. For We assuredly sent amongst every People a Messenger, (with the Command),

"Serve Allah and eschew Evil":

C2060. Even though Allah's Signs are everywhere in Nature and in men's own conscience, yet in addition Allah has sent human Messengers to every People to call their attention to the Good and turn them from Evil.

So they cannot pretend that Allah has abandoned them or that He does not care what they do. His divine Grace always invites their will to choose the right.

... فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ هَدَى اللّهُ وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلالَةُ...

of the people were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom Error became inevitably (established).

C2061. While some people accept the guidance of the divine Grace, others so surrender themselves to Evil that it must necessarily follow that Evil obtains a grip over them. They have only to travel through Time or Space to

see the end of those who abandoned their lights and surrendered to Evil and Error.

For **haqqat** and the meaning of haqq in this connection cf. 15:64.

... فَسِيرُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ فَانظُرُواْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٣٦)

So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the Truth).

... إِن تَحْرِصْ عَلَى هُدَاهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَهْدِي مَن يُضِلُّ

37. If thou art anxious for their guidance, yet Allah guideth not such as He leaves to stray,

C2062. When once Allah's Grace is rejected by any one, such a person loses all help and guidance. Such persons are then outside Allah's Grace, and therefore they are outside guidance.

... وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٣٧)

and there is none to help them.

... وَأَقْسَمُواْ بِاللّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ

38. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah,

C2063. The strongest oath of the Pagan Arabs would be by the Supreme Allah; less strong oaths would be by their subordinate deities, or their ancestors, or other things they valued or held sacred.

... لاَ يَبْعَثُ اللّهُ مَن يَمُوتُ

that Allah will not raise up those who die:

C2064. The usual Pagan creed is:

'If there is a God, it does not follow that He will raise us up; why should He?'

The answer is twofold:

- Allah has promised it, and Allah's promise is true;
- He must finally manifest the Truth to them, convict them of their falsehood, and enforce their personal responsibility (16:39).

... بَلَى وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَـكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٨)

Nay, but it is a promise (binding) on Him in truth:

but most among mankind realize it not.

...لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ

39. (They must be raised up), in order that He may manifest to them the truth of that wherein they differ,

... وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ كَاذِبِينَ (٣٩)

and that the rejecters of Truth may realize that they had indeed (surrendered to) Falsehood.

C2065. See the last note.

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَن نَّقُولَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ (٤٠)

40. For to anything which We have willed, We but say the Word, "Be," and it is.

C2066. Allah's **"Word"** is in itself the Deed, Allah's Promise is in itself the Truth. There is no interposition of Time or Condition between His Will and its consequences, for He is the Ultimate Reality.

He is independent of the proximate or material causes, for He Himself creates them and establishes their Laws as He pleases.

Section 6

... وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ فِي اللّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُواْ

41. To those who leave their homes in the Cause of Allah, after suffering oppression --

C2067. There is no merit in suffering exile (Hijrah) in itself. To have any merit, it must be;

- in the cause of Allah, and
- after such an oppression as forces the sufferer to choose between Allah and man.

When these conditions are fulfilled, the exiles are entitled to the highest honour, as having made a great sacrifice in the cause of Allah.

Such were the early Muslim exiles to Abyssinia; such were the later exiles to Madinah before the Prophet himself left his home in Makkah and went to Madinah; and such were the exiles who went with the Prophet or followed him.

At all these stages, his approval or advice was always obtained, either specifically or generally.

... لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً...

We will assuredly give a goodly home in this world:

... وَلَأَجْرُ الآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤١)

but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater, if they only realize (this)!

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٤٢)

42. (They are) those who persevere in patience, and put their trust on their Lord.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ إِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ...

43. And before thee also the Messengers We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration:

C2068. Allah's prophets were always men, not angels; and their distinction was the inspiration they received.

... فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤٣)

if ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the Message.

C2069. If the Pagan Arabs, who were ignorant of religious and other history, wondered how a man from among themselves could receive inspiration and bring a Message from Allah, let them ask the Jews, who had also received Allah's Message earlier through Moses, whether Moses was a man, or an angel, or a god. They would learn that Moses was a man like themselves, but inspired by Allah.

"Those who possess the Message" may also mean any men of Wisdom, who were qualified to have an opinion in such matters.

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ...

44. (We sent them) with Clear Signs and Scriptures;

C2070. As the People of the Book had received "Clear Signs" and inspired Books before, so also Allah's Message came to the Prophet Muhammad through the Quran, which superseded the earlier revelations, already corrupted in the hands of their followers. (R).

... وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ...

and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them,

... وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٤٤)

and that they may give thought.

أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ...

45. Do then those who devise evil (plots) feel secure

... أَن يَخْسِفَ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الأَرْضَ...

that Allah will not cause the earth to swallow them up,

... أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ (٤٥)

or that the Wrath will not seize them from directions they little perceive? --

C2071. Cf. 16:26.

The wicked plot against Prophets of Allah in secret, forgetting that every hidden thought of theirs is known to Allah, and that for every thought and action of theirs they will have to account to Allah.

And Allah's punishment can seize them in various ways. Four are enumerated here.

1. They may be swallowed up in the earth like Qarun, whose story is told in 28:76-81.

He was swallowed up in the earth while he was arrogantly exulting on the score of his wealth.

2. It may be that, like Haman, the prime minister of Pharaoh, they are plotting against Allah, when they are themselves overwhelmed by some dreadful calamity; 40:36-38, 29:39-40.

   The case of Pharaoh is also in point. He was drowned while he was arrogantly hoping to frustrate Allah's plans for Israel-, 10:90-92.

For 3 and 4 see the next two notes. (R).

أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ فِي تَقَلُّبِهِمْ...

46. Or that He may not call them to account in the midst of their goings to and fro,

C2072.

3. Or the punishment may come to people away from their homes and humble them in their pride. It so happened to Abu Jahl, who came exulting in his pride to the Battle of Badr (A.H. 2).

   His army was three times the size of the Muslim army from Madinah. But it suffered a crushing defeat, and he himself was ignominiously slain.

... فَمَا هُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٤٦)

without a chance of their frustrating Him? --

أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ عَلَى تَخَوُّفٍ...

47. Or that He may not call them to account by a process of slow wastage --

C2073.

4. Or, as often happens, the punishment comes slowly and imperceptibly, the power of the enemies of Allah being wasted gradually, until it is extinguished.

   This happened to the Makkans during the eight years of the Prophet's exile. The conquest of Makkah was bloodless, because the power of the enemy had gradually vanished. The Prophet was thus able to

show the unexampled generosity and clemency which he showed on that occasion, for two of Allah's attributes are expressed in the titles **"Full of kindness" (Ra'uf)** and **"Full of mercy" (Rahim)**.

... فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٤٧)

for thy Lord is indeed full of kindness and mercy.

أَوَ لَمْ يَرَوْاْ إِلَى مَا خَلَقَ اللّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ...

48. Do they not look at Allah's creation, (even) among (inanimate) things --

C2074. 1 take **"things"** here to be inanimate things, for the next verse speaks of living, "moving creatures" and angels.

By a metaphor even such inanimate things are spoken of as recognising Allah and humbly worshipping Him. Even their shadows turn round from right and left according to the light from above, and they humbly prostrate themselves on the ground to celebrate the praises of Allah.

... يَتَفَيَّأُ ظِلاَلُهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَآئِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلّهِ...

how their (very) shadows turn round, from the right and the left, prostrating themselves to Allah,

The **"shadow"** suggest how all things in this life are mere shadows of the true Reality in heaven, and they should turn and move in accordance with the divine light, as the shadows of trees and buildings move in one direction or another, and lengthen or shorten according to the light from heaven.

... وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ (٤٨)

and that in the humblest manner?

وَلِلّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ مِن دَآبَّةٍ وَالْمَلآئِكَةُ...

49. And to Allah doth obeisance all that is in the heavens and on earth, whether moving (living) creatures or the angels:

C2075. Moving creatures, i.e., living creatures,

"All that is in the heavens or earth," includes every created thing. And created things are mentioned in three classes:

1. inanimate things,
2. ordinary living things, and
3. angels.

Even the highest angels are not **arrogant**; they bow down and serve their Lord, and so does all Creation.

... وَهُمْ لاَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٤٩)

for none are arrogant (before their Lord).

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ (٥٠)

50. They all revere their Lord, high above them,
and they do all that they are commanded.

C2076. Allah is so high above the highest of His creatures, that they all look up to him in awe and reverence. And they joyfully do their duty in serving Him.

This is the meaning of the "fear of the Lord."

C.125 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(16:51-83)

There is but One God, He Who gives
All blessings to man and other creatures.
His greatest gift is that He reveals
Himself. But in many tangible ways
He cares for man and provides for his growth
And sustenance. In rain, in milk,
In fruits and honey, and in Nature and the life
Of man, with his opportunities

Of social, moral, and spiritual growth,
Are Signs for those who understand.
Why then does man show ingratitude
By going after false gods and forgetting Allah?

Section 7

وَقَالَ اللّهُ لاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ إِلـهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ...

51. Allah has said:

"Take not (for worship) two gods:

C2077. The ancient Persians believed in two powers in the Universe, one good and the other evil.

The Pagan Arabs also had pairs of deities: e.g., Jibr (Sorcery) and Tagat (Evil), referred to in 4:51, n. 573,

or the idols on Safa and Marwa referred to in n. 160 to 2:158: their names were Isaf and Nayla.

... إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

for He is just One Allah:

... فَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ (٥١)

then fear Me (and Me alone)."

وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاصِبًا...

52. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and on earth, and to Him is duty due always:

... أَفَغَيْرَ اللّهِ تَتَّقُونَ (٥٢)

then will ye fear other than Allah?

C2078. The Pagans might have a glimmering of the One True God, but they had also a haunting fear of malevolent Powers of Evil. They are told that such fears are groundless. Evil has no power over those who trust in Allah: 15:42.

The only fear they should have is that of the Wrath of Allah. To the righteous all good things come from Allah, and they have no fear in their hearts.

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّهِ...

53. And ye have no good thing but is from Allah:

... ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ (٥٣)

and moreover, when ye are touched by distress, unto Him ye cry with groans;

C2079. Which shows that the natural tendency of man is to seek Allah, the only Power which can truly relieve distress.

ثُمَّ إِذَا كَشَفَ الضُّرَّ عَنكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنكُم بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ (٥٤)

54. Yet, when He removes the distress from you, behold! some of you turn to other gods to join with their Lord --

لِيَكْفُرُواْ بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ...

55. (As if) to show their ingratitude for the favors We have bestowed on them!

... فَتَمَتَّعُواْ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٥٥)

Then enjoy (your brief day); but soon will ye know (your folly)!

... وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِمَا لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ

56. And they (even) assign, to things they do not know,

C2080. Idols and fictitious gods are certainly things of which they have no knowledge, idols being lifeless things of whose life or doings no knowledge is possible, and fictitious gods being but figments of their imagination.

... نَصِيبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ...

a portion out of that which we have bestowed for their sustenance!

C2081. Cf. 6:136-140, 142-144, and 5:103.

The Pagans, in assigning and dedicating some of their children, or some of their cattle, or some of the produce

of their fields, to their false gods as sharers with the true Supreme God, made themselves doubly ridiculous;

- first, because every good thing that they valued was given to them by Allah, and how could they patronizingly assign to Him a share of His own gifts?
- and secondly, because they brought in other gods as sharers, who had no existence whatever!

Besides, the cattle and produce was given for their physical sustenance and the children for their social and spiritual sustenance, and how can they, poor creatures, give sustenance to Allah?

... تَاللّٰهِ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَفْتَرُونَ (٥٦)

By Allah, ye shall certainly be called to account for your false inventions.

... وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلّٰهِ الْبَنَاتِ

57. And they assign daughters for Allah!

C2082. Some of the Pagan Arabs called angels the daughters of Allah. In their own life they hated to have daughters, as explained in the next two verses.

They practised female infanticide. In their state of perpetual war sons were a source of strength to them; daughters only made them subject to humiliating raids!

... سُبْحَانَهُ...

Glory be to Him!

... وَلَهُم مَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٥٧)

and for themselves (sons, the issue) the desire!

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِالأُنثَى ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ (٥٨)

58. When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief!

يَتَوَارَى مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِن سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ...

59. With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had!

C2083. "It", in this and the following clause, refers grammatically to the "news" (ma bushshira bihi).

In meaning it refers to the "female child" - by the figure of speech known as metonymy.

... أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَى هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ...

Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust?

C2084. Cf. 81:8-9.

The practice of female infanticide is condemned in scathing terms. Female children used to be buried alive by the Pagan Arabs.

... أَلاَ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (٥٩)

Ah! what an evil (choice) they decide on!

C2085. It was an evil choice to decide on. Either alternative -to keep the poor girl as a thing of sufferance and contempt, bringing disgrace on the family, or to get rid of it by burying it alive- was cruel and indefensible.

Section 8

لِلَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ وَلِلّهِ الْمَثَلُ الأَعْلَى...

60. To those who believe not in the Hereafter, applies the similitude of evil:

to Allah applies the highest similitude:

C2086. The word **mathal** ordinarily denotes a similitude, but in the context of the present verse, especially with reference to Allah, it signifies His sublime attributes rather than a similitude. Cf. 30:27. [Eds.]

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٦٠)

for He is the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِم مَّا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ...

61. If Allah were to punish men for their wrongdoing, He would not leave, on the (earth), a single living creature:

... وَلَكِن يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

but He gives them respite for a stated term:

... فَإِذَا جَاء أَجَلُهُمْ لاَ يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلاَ يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ (٦١)

when their term expires, they would not be able to delay (the punishment) for a single hour, just as they would not be able to anticipate it (for a single hour).

C2087. Allah's decree works without fail. If He were to punish for every wrong or shortcoming, not a single living creature on earth would escape punishment. But in His infinite mercy and forgiveness, He gives respite: He provides time for repentance.

If the repentance is forthcoming. Allah's Mercy is forthcoming without fail, if not, the punishment comes inevitably on the expiry of the Term.

The sinner cannot anticipate it by an insolent challenge, nor can he delay it when the time arrives. Let him not think that the respite given him may mean that he can do what he likes, and that he can escape scot-free from the consequences.

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلّهِ مَا يَكْرَهُونَ...

62. They attribute to Allah what they hate (for themselves),

C2088. See above, 16:57-58 and notes.

... وَتَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكَذِبَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنَى...

and their tongues assert the falsehood that all good things are for themselves:

C2089. The philosophy of Pleasure (Hedonism) assumes that worldly enjoyment is good in itself and that there is nothing beyond. But it can be shown, even on its own ground, that every act has its inevitable consequences.

No Good can spring out of Evil. For falsehood and wrong the agony of the Fire is waiting, and the boastful votaries of Falsehood will be the first to fall into it.

... لاَ جَرَمَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَأَنَّهُم مُّفْرَطُونَ (٦٢)

without doubt for them is the fire, and they will be the first to be hastened on into it!

تَاللّهِ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

63. By Allah, We (also) sent (our prophets) to peoples before thee; but Satan made, (to the wicked), their own acts seem alluring:

... فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٦٣)

he is also their patron today, but they shall have a most grievous Penalty.

C2090. In all ages and among all Peoples Allah sent His Messengers to teach the Truth and point the way to righteousness. But the allurements of Evil seemed always attractive, and many men preferred their own ways and the ways of their ancestors to the more difficult path of rectitude.

This happened again in the time of Al-Mustafa, and will always happen as long as men succumb to Evil.

وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُواْ فِيهِ...

64. And We sent down the Book to thee for the express purpose, that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which they differ,

C2091. But the path of duty before Allah's Messenger is clear. He is sent with the Revelation (the Quran) for three express purposes;

1. that he should bring about unity among the jarring sects, for the Gospel of Unity, while preaching the One True God, leads also to the unity of mankind;
2. that the revelation should be a guide to right conduct; and
3. that it should show the path of repentance and Salvation, and thus be the highest mercy to erring sinners.

... وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦٤)

and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe.

وَاللّهُ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

65. And Allah sends down rain from the skies, and gives therewith life to the earth after its death:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ (٦٥)

verily in this is a Sign for those who listen.

C2092. When the earth with all its vegetation is well-nigh dead, parched and shriveled up, a vivifying shower of rain from above gives it new life.

This natural phenomenon is a sign of Allah's infinite power, especially of His power to resurrect the dead, and thereafter muster them for judgment. [Eds.]

Section 9

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً...

66. And verily in cattle (too) will ye find an instructive Sign.

C2093. The spiritual sustenance which Allah gives is typified by the wonderful ways of sustenance in the physical world, which figure forth Allah's providence and loving care for His creation. And the wonderful transformations in the physical world, which all tend to the benefit of man, are also Signs of His supreme wisdom.

In the previous verse rain was mentioned, which gives new life to dead nature. In this and the following two verses our attention is drawn to milk, the products of the date and the vine, and honey.

... نُّسْقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِ ...

From what is within their bodies,

C2094. Their; in the Arabic, it is "its", in the singular number, for two reasons:

- cattle is the generic plural, and may be treated as a singular noun;
- the instructive Sign is in cattle collectively, but the milk is the product of each single individual.

... مِن بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا...

between excretions and blood, We produce, for your drink, milk, pure

C2095. Milk is a secretion in the female body, like other secretions, but more specialized.

Is it not wonderful that the same food, eaten by males and females, produces in the latter, when they have young, the wholesome and complete food, known as milk?

Then, when cattle are tamed and specially bred for milk, the supply of milk is vastly greater than is necessary for their young and lasts for a longer time than during the period they give suck to their young.

And it is a wholesome and agreeable diet for man. It is pure, as typified by its whiteness. Yet it is a secretion like other secretions, between the excretions which the body rejects as worthless and the precious blood-stream which circulates within the body and is the symbol of life itself to the animal which produces it.

... سَآئِغًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ (٦٦)

and agreeable to those who drink it.

...وَمِن ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالأعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا

67. And from the fruit of the date-palm and the vine, ye get out wholesome drink and food:

C2096. There are wholesome drinks and foods that can be got out of the date-palm and the vine: e.g., non-alcoholic drinks from the date and the grape, vinegar, date-sugar, grape-sugar, and dates and grapes themselves for eating.

If **sakar** is taken in the sense of fermented wine, it would refer to the time before intoxicants were prohibited, for this is a Makkan Surah and the prohibition came in Madinah. In such a case it would imply a subtle disapproval of the use of intoxicants and mark the first of a series of steps that in time culminated in total prohibition. (R).

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٦٧)

behold, in this also is a Sign for those who are wise.

وَأَوْحَى رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ...

68. And thy Lord taught the Bee to build its cells in hills, on trees,

C2097. Auha: wahyan ordinarily means inspiration, the Message put into the mind or heart by Allah.

Here the Bee's instinct is referred to Allah's teaching, which it undoubtedly is. In 99:5, it is applied to the earth; we shall discuss the precise meaning when we come to that passage.

The honey-comb, itself, with its hexagonal cells, geometrically perfect, is a wonderful structure, and is well called **buyut**, homes. And the way the bee finds out inaccessible places, in the hills, in the trees, and even among the habitations of men, is one of the marvels of Allah's working in His Creation.

... وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ (٦٨)

and in (men's) habitations;

... ثُمَّ كُلِي مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ

69. Then to eat of all the produce (of the earth),

C2098. The bee assimilates the juice of various kinds of flowers and fruit, and forms within its body the honey which it stores in its cells of wax.

The different kinds of food from which it makes its honey give different colours to the honey, e.g., it is dark-brown, light-brown, yellow, white, and so on. The taste and flavour also varies, as in the case of heather honey, the honey formed from scented flowers, and so on. As food it is sweet and wholesome, and it is used in medicine.

Note that while the instinctive individual acts are described in the singular number, the produce of "their bodies" is described in the plural, as the result of their collective effort.

... فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلاً...

and find with skill the spacious paths of its Lord:

C2099. Zululan: two meanings are possible;

- ways easy and spacious, referring to the unerring way in which bees find their way from long distances to their combs; and
- the idea of humility and obedience in them.

From both we can derive a metaphorical and spiritual meaning.

... يَخْرُجُ مِن بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاء لِلنَّاسِ...

there issues from within their bodies a drink of varying colors, wherein is healing for men:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٦٩)

verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought.

وَاللّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ...

70. It is Allah who creates you and takes your souls at death;

... وَمِنكُم مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لاَ يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا...

and of you there are some who are sent back to a feeble age, so that they know nothing after having known (much):

C2100. Besides the mystery and beauty of the many processes going on in the working of Allah's Creation, there is the wonderful life of man himself on this earth;

- how he is created as a child;
- how he grows in intelligence and knowledge; and
- how his soul is taken back and his body suffers dissolution.
- In some cases he lives so long that he falls into a feeble old age like a second childhood; he forgets what he learnt and seems almost to go back in Time.

Is not all this wonderful, and evidence of the Knowledge and Power of Allah?

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ (٧٠)

for Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

C2101. Our attention having been called to the remarkable transformations in life and nature, by which the Knowledge and Power of Allah work out His beneficient Plan for His creatures, we are reminded that man at best is but a feeble creature, but for the grace of Allah, We then pass on in the next Section to the differences in the gifts which men themselves enjoy, distinguishing them into so many categories. How much greater is the difference between the created things and their Creator?

Section 10

وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ...

71. Allah has bestowed His gifts of sustenance more freely on some of you than on others;

... فَمَا الَّذِينَ فُضِّلُوا بِرَادِّي رِزْقِهِمْ عَلَى مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ...

those more favored are not going to throw back their gifts to those whom their right hands possess, so as to be equal in that respect.

... أَفَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ (٧١)

Will they then deny the favors of Allah?

C2102. Even in the little differences in gifts, which men enjoy from Allah, men with superior gifts are not going to abandon them so as to be equal with men of inferior gifts, whom, perhaps, they hold in subjection. They will never deny their own superiority.

How then (as the argument is pursued in the two following verses), can they ignore the immense difference between the Creator and created things, and make the latter, in their thoughts, partners with Allah?

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا...

72. And Allah has made for you mates (and companions) of your own nature.

C2103. Of your nature: or of yourselves. Cf. 4:1 and n. 504,

Self, or Personality, or Soul, all imply a bundle of attributes, capacities, predilections, and dispositions, which we may sum up in the word Nafs, or nature.

Woman was made to be;

- a mate or companion for man;
- except for sex, of the same nature as man, and therefore, with the same moral and religious rights and duties; and
- she is not to be considered a source of all evil or sin, as the Christian monks characterized her but rather as a blessing, one of the favours (*Ni'mah*) of Allah.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُم بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً ...

And made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren,

C2104. Hafadah: - collective plural, grandchildren, and descendants.

The root hafada also implies obedient service and ministration. Just as the sons (first mentioned) should be a source of strength, so daughters and grand children should serve and contribute to the happiness of fathers and grandparents, and are to be looked upon as further blessings.

... وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ...

and provided for you sustenance of the best:

... أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ (٧٢)

will they then believe in vain things, and be ungrateful for Allah's favors?

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللّهِ...

73. And worship others than Allah,

... مَا لاَ يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ شَيْئًا ...

such as have no power of providing them, for sustenance, with anything in heavens or earth,

C2105. "Sustenance" (rizq) in all this passage (16:65-74), as elsewhere, implies all that is n for man's life and growth, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual.

- Milk, fruit, and honey are examples of physical gifts, with a metaphorical reference to mental and moral health;
- family life is an example of moral and social and (ultimately) spiritual opportunities in the life of man; and
- in 16:65 is an example of rain in the physical world as a type of Allah's revelation in the spiritual world.

... وَلاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ (٧٣)

and cannot possibly have such power?

فَلاَ تَضْرِبُواْ لِلّهِ الأَمْثَالَ...

74. Invent not similitudes for Allah:

C2106. Cf. 16:60 above, and n. 2086.

One instance of false similitudes is where Pagans say their gods are mere types of symbols, or where men pray to men as Intercessors.

... إِنَّ اللّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٧٤)

for Allah knoweth, and ye know not.

ضَرَبَ اللّهُ مَثَلاً...

75. Allah sets forth the Parable (of two men: one)

... عَبْدًا مَّمْلُوكًا لاَّ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ...

a slave under the dominion of another; he has no power of any sort;

C2107. The first parable is of two men, one of whom is a slave completely under the dominion of another, with no powers of any sort, and another a free man, who is gifted in every way, and is most generous in bestowing out of his opulent wealth (material as well as intangible), privately and publicly, without let or hindrance; for he is his own master and owes no account to any one.

- The first is like the imaginary gods which men set up, -whether powers of nature, which have no independent existence but are manifestations of Allah, or deified heroes or men, who can do nothing of their own authority but are subject to the Will and Power of Allah;
- the second describes in a faint way the position of Allah, the Self-Subsistent, to Whom belongs the dominion of all that is in heaven and earth, and Who bestows freely of His gifts on all His creatures.

... وَمَن رَّزَقْنَاهُ مِنَّا رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا...

and (the other) a man on whom We have bestowed goodly favors from ourselves, and he spends thereof (freely), privately and publicly:

... هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ...

are the two equal? (By no means);

... الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٥)

praise be to Allah.

But most of them understand not.

وَضَرَبَ اللّهُ مَثَلاً...

76. Allah sets forth (another)

... رَّجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمُ لاَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَىَ شَيْءٍ...

Parable of two men:

one of them dumb, with no power of any sort; a wearisome burden is he to his master;

... وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّهْهُ لاَ يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ...

whichever way he directs him, he brings no good:

C2108. In the second Parable, one man is dumb;

he can explain nothing, and he can certainly do nothing; he is only a wearisome burden to his master, no matter what his master asks him to do; or perhaps he is really harmful instead of bringing any good; such are idols (literal and metaphorical) when taken as false gods.

The other man is in a position to command, and he commands what is just and righteous; not only his commands but his doings also are on the path of righteousness.

Such are the qualities of Allah.

... هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَن يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٧٦)

is such a man equal with one who commands justice, and is on a straight way?

C2109. The gist of the argument is that those who deviate from the worship of Allah commit twofold treason.

1. They do not recognise the immense difference between the Creator and created things, although, in their own little selfish lives, they are tenacious of any little differences there may be between themselves and other fellow-creatures not so gifted.
2. They are guilty of gross ingratitude in forgetting that the source of goodness and power is Allah, to Whom alone they owe all the gifts they enjoy in life.

Section 11

وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

77. To Allah belongeth the mystery of the heavens and the earth.

C2110. The key to all things-not only those which we see and understand, but those which we do not see or of which we have no idea-is with Allah, Whose knowledge and power are supreme.

... وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلاَّ كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ...

And the decision of the Hour (of Judgment) is as the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker:

C2111. Lures of this world and its fleeting pleasures often make man forget that the life hereafter is an imminent reality.

Many of those who claim to believe in the life to come act and behave as if it belonged to a distant future, and had no relevance to their present activities and mode of living. The Quran repeatedly reminds man that the Hour of Reckoning is not a distant possibility, but very close to man, and could come to pass any moment.

The wisest course for man, therefore, is to be always alert and watchful and steer clear of all forms of sin and impiety, for when the Promised Hour comes it will come all of a sudden and without any prior notice.

See also 10:45; 30:55, 45:35. [Eds]

... إِنَّ اللّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٧٧)

for Allah hath power over all things.

وَاللّهُ أَخْرَجَكُم مِّن بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا...

78. It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing;

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالأبْصَارَ وَالأفْئِدَةَ ...

and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections:

C2112. Literally, 'hearts,' which are considered the centres of the affections, and in Arabic idiom, of intelligence also.

We should therefore give thanks to Allah, not to imaginary deities or powers or forces.

... لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٨)

that ye may give thanks (to Allah).

أَلَمْ يَرَوْاْ إِلَى الطَّيْرِ...

79. Do they not look at the birds,

... مُسَخَّرَاتٍ فِي جَوِّ السَّمَاءِ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلاَّ اللّهُ...

held poised in the midst of (the air and) the sky?

Nothing holds them up but (the power of) Allah.

C2113. All the wonderful things in creation are due to the artistry, power, and wisdom of Allah. Such is the flight of birds in mid-air.

So also are the inventions and discoveries, due to man's intelligence, in the next verse; for man's intelligence is a gift direct from Allah.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٧٩)

Verily in this are Signs for those who believe.

وَاللّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا...

80. It is Allah who made your habitations homes of rest and quiet for you;

C2114. Man's social, intellectual, and spiritual gifts make, of his permanent dwellings, homes of rest and quiet, of refinement and the purer affections, which are the types, in this earthly life, of the highest spiritual Good, the love of Allah.

The pure Home thus becomes the type of the highest spiritual Destiny of man. And these capacities in man are the gifts of Allah.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن جُلُودِ الأَنْعَامِ بُيُوتًا تَسْتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ إِقَامَتِكُمْ...

and made for you out of the skins of animals, (tents for) dwellings, which ye find so light (and handy) when ye travel and when ye stop (in your travels);

C2115. When man travels, he wants temporary dwellings, tents, which he can make of the skins of

animals, or of the fabrics of vegetable fibers, similar to the skins of animals.

These tents are easy to carry when moving, and easy to pitch during halts.

... وَمِنْ أَصْوَافِهَا وَأَوْبَارِهَا وَأَشْعَارِهَا أَثَاثًا...

and out of their wool, and their soft fibers (between wool and hair), and their hair, rich stuff

C2116. Suf, wool, is what we get from sheep.

Sha'r, hair**,** is what we get from goats or similar animals, for weaving into fabrics.

Wabar is the soft camel's hair of which, also, fabrics are woven;

they may be considered intermediate between the other two; by extension and analogy the term may be applied to furs and such things, by way of illustration.

... وَمَتَاعًا إِلَى حِينٍ (٨٠)

and articles of convenience (to serve you) for a time.

C2117. All such articles of refined luxury, and useful articles of comfort and convenience only last for a while, but they must be considered as Allah's gifts.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلَالاً...

81. It is Allah who made, out of the things He created some things to give you shade;

C2118. For example, trees, gardens, the roofs of houses; also from another point of view, the fact that the sun's rays at various times and in various parts of the earth, come obliquely, thus causing shadow along with sunshine. In the hills there are caves and grottoes.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْجِبَالِ أَكْنَانًا...

of the hills He made some for your shelter;

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُم بَأْسَكُمْ...

He made you garments to protect you from heat, and coats of mail to protect you from your (mutual) violence.

C2119. Our clothes protect us from heat and cold, just as our armour protects us from the hurt which we might otherwise receive in battle.

... كَذَٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ (٨١)

Thus does He complete his favors on you, that ye may bow to His will (in Islam).

C2120. All these blessings, which have both a physical and (by promoting the good of man) a spiritual purpose, should teach us to rally to Allah and tune our will with His Universal Will, which is another name for Islam.

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا۟ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْبَلَٰغُ ٱلْمُبِينُ (٨٢)

82. But if they turn away, thy duty is only to preach the clear message.

... يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنكِرُونَهَا

83. They recognize the favors of Allah; then they deny them;

C2121. 'Arafa is distinguished from 'alima is implying a specific discernment (or recognition) of various qualities and uses.

All mankind recognised the value of the blessings they enjoy, but in forgetting or disobeying their Author, the wicked show gross ingratitude; for in practice they deny their obligation to Him for those blessings.

... وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨٣)

and most of them are (creatures) ungrateful.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا...

84. One day We shall raise from all peoples a witness:

C2122. To each People is sent Allah's Messenger or Teacher, to point out the right way. There may be one, or there may be many. Such a Messenger (Rasul) will be a witness that Allah's Truth was preached to all peoples in express terms, in addition to the Signs of Allah

everywhere in nature. There will then be no room for excuses of any kind.

Those who rejected Allah after repeated warnings cannot reasonably ask for more respite, as they had every kind of respite during their life of probation; nor can they now take refuge behind Allah's Grace, which they had repeatedly rejected.

... ثُمَّ لاَ يُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَلاَ هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ (٨٤)

then will no excuse be accepted from Unbelievers,

nor will they receive any favors.

C2122a. That is, they will not be allowed to seek grace by repentance.

Cf. 30:57, 45:35. [Eds.]

C.126 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(16:84-100)

Allah's Prophets, if rejected, will be witnesses
Against those who reject Allah's Truth!
And all false gods will disappear.
A life of justice and righteousness is enjoined
By Allah, and the strictest fidelity, in intent
And action. For Allah will judge us
By our faith and deeds, and noo evil
Shall have power over those who believe
And put their trust in Allah their Lord

Section 12

... وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ الْعَذَابَ فَلاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ

85. When the wrongdoers (actually) see the Penalty, then will it in no way be mitigated,

C2123. When the terrible Penalty is actually on them, it is too late for repentance and for asking for Mercy. Justice must take its course.

... وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (٨٥)

nor will they then receive respite.

...وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءهُمْ قَالُوا

86. When those who gave partners to Allah will see their "partners," they will say:

... رَبَّنَا هَـؤُلاء شُرَكَآؤُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُوْ مِن دُونِكَ...

"Our Lord! these are our 'partners,' those whom we used to invoke besides thee."

C2124. The worshippers of false gods will try to shift the responsibility from their own shoulders to that of the false gods.

They will suggest (though they will not have the courage for such a bare-faced lie) that they were misled by the false gods. But their lying suggestion will be contradicted and thrown back at them as explained in the next note.

... فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ إِنَّكُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (٨٦)

But they will throw back their word at them (and say): "Indeed ye are liars!"

...وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَى اللّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلَمَ

87. That day shall they (openly) show (their) submission to Allah;

C2125. In so far as the false gods were real things, such as deified men or forces of nature, they will openly disclaim them and then (as always) show their submission to Allah.

In so far as the false gods were the invention of the fancy of the idolaters, they will leave their worshippers in the lurch, for they will be shown as non-existent.

... وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (٨٧)

and all their inventions shall leave them in the lurch.

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَصَدُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ زِدْنَاهُمْ عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ...

88. Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the path of Allah, for them will We add Penalty to Penalty;

... بِمَا كَانُواْ يُفْسِدُونَ (٨٨)

for that they used to spread mischief.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ...

89. One day We shall raise from all peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves:

C2126. To the thought expressed in 16:84 above, is added another detail here.

Not only will there be witnesses from Peoples, but the witnesses will be men from amongst the Peoples themselves, men of their own kith and kin, who understood them and explained Allah's Message in their own language.

The Prophet Muhammad will be witness against all those who rejected the Message he brought.

For those who believe in him of (all races and peoples), the Book which he brought will be an explanation, a guide, a mercy and a Gospel. (R).

... وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَى هَؤُلاء...

and We shall bring thee as a witness against these (thy people):

... وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things,

... وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ (٨٩)

a guide a Mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims.

إِنَّ اللّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاء ذِي الْقُرْبَى...

90. Allah commands

- justice,
- the doing of good,
- and liberality to kith and kin,

... وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاء وَالْمُنكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ...

and He forbids

- all shameful deeds,
- and injustice and rebellion:

... يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٩٠)

He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition.

C2127. Justice is a comprehensive term, and may include all the virtues of cold philosophy. But religion asks for something warmer and more human, the doing of good deeds even where perhaps they are not strictly demanded by justice, such as returning good for ill, or obliging those who in worldly language "have no claim" on you; and of course a *fortiori* the fulfilling of the claims of those whose claims arc recognised in social life.

Similarly the opposites are to be avoided; everything that is recognised as shameful, and everything that is really unjust, and any inward rebellion against Allah's Law or our own conscience in its most sensitive form.

Section 13

وَأَوْفُواْ بِعَهْدِ اللّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدتُّمْ...

91. Fulfil the Covenant of Allah when ye have entered into it,

... وَلاَ تَنقُضُواْ الأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلاً...

and break not your oaths after ye have confirmed them;

indeed ye have made Allah your surety;

C2128. The immediate reference may or may not be to the oath of fidelity to the Prophet taken at 'Aqaba fourteen months before the Hijrah and repeated a little later: see 5:7, and n. 705.

But the general meaning is much wider. And this may be viewed in two aspects;

- Every oath taken, or covenant made, is a Covenant before Allah, and should be faithfully observed. In this it approaches in meaning to 5:1.

- In particular, every Muslim makes, by the profession, of his Faith, a Covenant with Allah, and he confirms that Covenant every time he repeats that profession. He should therefore faithfully observe the duties taught to him by Islam.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٩١)

for Allah knoweth all that ye do.

...وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِن بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنكَاثًا

92. And be not like a woman who breaks into untwisted strands they yarn which she has spun, after it has become strong.

C2129. The Covenant which binds us in the spiritual world makes us strong, like strands of fluffy cotton spun into a strong thread. It also gives us a sense of security against much evil in this world.

It costs a woman much labour and skill to spin good strong yarn. She would be foolish indeed, after she has spun such yarn, to untwist its constituent strands and break them into flimsy pieces.

... تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ...

Nor take your oaths to practice deception between yourselves,

C2130. Nor: I construe **tattakhithuna** with takunu in the previous clause.

... أَن تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَى مِنْ أُمَّةٍ...

lest one party should be more numerous than another:

C2131. Do not make your religion merely a game of making your own party numerically strong by alliances cemented by oaths, which you readily break when a more numerous party offers you its alliance.

The Quraish were addicted to this vice, and in international politics at the present day, this seems to be almost a standard of national self-respect and international skill.

Islam teaches nobler ethics for individuals and nations. A Covenant should be looked upon as a solemn thing, not

to be entered into except with the sincerest intention of carrying it out; and it is binding even if large numbers are ranged against it.

... إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ...

for Allah will test you by this;

... وَلَيُبَيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٩٢)

and on the Day of Judgment He will certainly make clear to you (the truth of) that wherein ye disagree.

C2132. Disagreements need not necessarily cause conflict where the parties are sincere and honest and do not wish to take advantage of one another.

In such cases they do not go by numbers, groupings, and alliances, but by just conduct as in the sight of Allah. Honest differences will be removed when all things are made clear in the Hereafter.

وَلَوْ شَاء اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً...

93. If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people:

... وَلَكِن يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء...

but He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases:

C2133. Cf. 14:4 and n. 1875.

Allah's Will and Plan, in allowing limited free-will to man, is, not to force man's will, but to give all guidance, and leave alone those who reject that guidance, in case they should repent and come back into Grace.

But in all cases, in so far as we are given the choice, we shall be called to account for all our actions. "Leaving to stray" does not mean that we can do what we please. Our personal responsibility remains.

... وَلَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٣)

but ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions.

وَلاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلاً بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا...

94. And take not your oaths, to practice deception between yourselves, with the result that someone's foot may slip after it was firmly planted;

C2134. In 16:92, above, the motive for false and fraudulent covenants was pointed out with reprobation. Now are pointed out the consequences, viz.,

- to others, if they had not been deceived, they might have walked firmly on the Path, but now they lose faith and perhaps commit like frauds for which you will be responsible;
- **to yourselves;** you have not only gone wrong yourselves; but have set others on the wrong path; and you deserve a double Penalty. Perhaps the "evil consequences" refer to this world, and the "Wrath" to the Hereafter.

... وَتَذُوقُواْ السُّوءَ بِمَا صَدَدتُّمْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللّهِ...

and ye may have to taste the evil (consequences) of having hindered (men) from the path of Allah,

... وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٩٤)

and a mighty Wrath descend on you.

وَلاَ تَشْتَرُواْ بِعَهْدِ اللّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً...

95. Nor sell the Covenant of Allah for a miserable price:

C2135. Any possible gain that you can make by breaking your Covenant and thus breaking Allah's Law must necessarily be miserable; while your own benefit is far greater in obeying Allah's Will and doing right.

... إِنَّمَا عِندَ اللّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٩٥)

for with Allah is (a prize) far better for you, if ye only knew.

مَا عِندَكُمْ يَنفَدُ وَمَا عِندَ اللّهِ بَاقٍ...

96. What is with you must vanish: what is with Allah will endure.

... وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦)

And We will certainly bestow, on those who patiently persevere, their reward according to the best of their actions.

C2136. What comparison can there possibly be between spiritual Good, which will endure for ever, and any temporal advantage which you may snatch in this world, which will fade and vanish in no time?

And then, Allah's generosity is unbounded. He rewards you, not according to your merits, but according to the very best of your actions.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً...

97. Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will We give a new life, a life that is good and pure,

C2137. Faith, if sincere, means right conduct. When these two confirm each other, Allah's grace transforms our life.

Instead of being troubled and worried, we have peace and contentment; instead of being assailed at every turn by false alarms and the assaults of evil, we enjoy calm and attain purity. The transformation is visible in this life itself, but the "reward" in terms of the Hereafter will be far beyond our deserts.

... وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٩٧)

and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.

C2138. The same ending as in the previous verse deepens the overall effect bringing home the message forcefully and beautifully.

The argument is completed and rounded off. (R).

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ (٩٨)

98. When thou dost read the Qur'án, seek Allah's protection from Satan the rejected one.

C2139. Evil has no authority or influence on those who put their trust in Allah. It is good to express that trust in outward actions, and a formal expression of it-as in the formula, "I seek Allah's protection from Evil"-helps us.

Reading or reciting the Quran should be understood both literally and figuratively as the symbol of the earnest desire of the soul to know and understand Allah's Will and act in accordance therewith.

Man is weak at best, and he should seek strength for his will in Allah's help and protection.

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٩٩)

99. No authority has he over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.

إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ (١٠٠)

100. His authority is over those only, who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah.

C.127 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(16:101-128)

Allah's Truth may come in stages, but it gives
Strength, guidance, and glad tidings, and should
Be held fast when once received. Be not
Like those who get puffed up with pride
In worldly good, and scorn the Truth.
Enjoy the good things of life, but render
Thanks to Allah and obey His Law.
Be true in faith, and proclaim His Word
With gentle, patient wisdom; for Allah
Is with those who live in self-restraint
A pure, good, and righteous Life.

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَّكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزِّلُ...

101. When We substitute one revelation for another, and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages),

C2140. See 2:106, and n. 107.

The doctrine of progressive revelation from age to age and time to time does not mean that Allah's fundamental Law changes.

It is not fair to charge a Prophet of Allah with forgery because the Message as revealed to him is in a different form from that revealed before, when the core of the Truth is the same, for it comes from Allah.

... قَالُواْ إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مُفْتَرٍ...

they say, "Thou art but a forger":

... بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٠١)

but most of them understand not.

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِن رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ...

102. Say,

the Holy Spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in truth,

C2141. The title of the Angel Gabriel, through whom the revelations came down.

... لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ ...

in order to strengthen those who believe,

C2142. The People of the Book, if they had true faith, were themselves strengthened in their faith and cleared of their doubts and difficulties by the revelations brought by Al-Mustafa; and all whether People of the Book or not -who came within the fold of Islam, found the Quran a Guide and a Gospel, i.e., a substitute for the Mosaic Law and for the Christian Gospel, which had both been corrupted.

... وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٠٢)

and as a guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims.

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ...

103. We know indeed that they say, "It is a man that teaches him."

... لِّسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَهَـٰذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٠٣)

The tongue of him they wickedly point to is notable foreign, while this is Arabic, pure and clear.

C2143. The wicked attribute to Prophets of Allah just such motives and springs of action as they themselves would be guilty of in such circumstances. The Pagans and those who were hostile to the revelation of Allah in Islam could not and cannot understand how such wonderful words could flow from the tongue of the Holy Prophet. They must need to postulate some human teacher.

Unfortunately for their postulate, any possible human teacher they could think of would be poor in Arabic speech if he had all the knowledge that the Quran reveals of previous revelations.

Apart from that, even the most eloquent Arab could not, and cannot, produce anything of the eloquence, width, and depth of Quranic teaching, as is evident from every verse of the Book. (R).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ...

104. Those who believe not in the Signs of Allah, Allah will not guide them,

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٠٤)

and theirs will be a grievous Penalty.

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ...

105. It is those who believe not in the Signs of Allah, that forge falsehood:

... وَأُوْلَـئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ (١٠٥)

it is they who lie!

C2144. It is clearly those who raise the cry of forgery that are guilty of falsehood, as there is not the least basis or even plausibility in their suggestion.

مَن كَفَرَ بِاللّهِ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ ...

106. Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters unbelief,

C2145. The exception refers to a case like that of 'Ammar, whose father Yasir and mother Sumayya, were subjected to unspeakable tortures for their belief in Islam, but never recanted. 'Ammar,

suffering under tortures himself and his mind acted on by the sufferings of his parents, uttered a word construed as recantation, though his heart never wavered and he came back at once to the Prophet, who consoled him for his pain and confirmed his faith. (R).

... إِلاَّ مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالإِيمَانِ...

except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in faith,

... وَلَـكِن مَّن شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنَ اللّهِ...

but such as open their breast to unbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah,

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٠٦)

and theirs will be a dreadful Penalty.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمُ اسْتَحَبُّواْ الْحَيَاةَ الْدُّنْيَا عَلَى الآخِرَةِ...

107. This because they love the life of this world better than the Hereafter:

... وَأَنَّ اللّهَ لاَ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٠٧)

and Allah will not guide those who reject faith.

أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ...

108. Those are they whose hearts, ears, and eyes Allah has sealed up,

C2146. Cf. 2:7.

On account of their iniquities and their want of Faith their hearts and their senses become impervious to Allah's grace, and they run headlong to perdition.

... وَأُولَـئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ (١٠٨)

and they take no heed.

لاَ جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرونَ (١٠٩)

109. Without doubt, in the hereafter they will perish.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ مِن بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُواْ...

110. But verily thy Lord to those who leave their homes after trials and persecutions

C2147. I take this verse to refer to such men as were originally with the Pagans but afterwards joined Islam, suffered hardships and exile, and fought and struggled in the Cause, with patience and constance. Their past would be blotted out and forgiven. Men like Khalid ibn Walid were numbered with the foremost heroes of Islam.

In that case this verse would be a Madinah verse, though the Surah as a whole is Makkan.

Perhaps it would be better to read, with some Commentators, **fatanu** in the active voice rather than futinu in the passive voice, and translate "after inflicting trials and persecutions (on Muslim)."

Notice the parallelism in construction between this verse and verse 119 below.

... ثُمَّ جَاهَدُواْ وَصَبَرُواْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِن بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١١٠)

and who thereafter strive and fight for the faith and patiently persevere, thy Lord, after all this, is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Section 15

يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ تُجَادِلُ عَن نَّفْسِهَا...

111. One day every soul will come up struggling for itself,

C2148. When the Reckoning comes, each soul will stand on its own personal responsibility. No one else can help it. Full justice will be done, and all the seeming inequalities of this world will be redressed.

... وَتُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُمْ لاَ يُظْلَمُونَ (١١١)

and every soul will be recompensed (fully) for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with.

وَضَرَبَ اللّهُ مَثَلاً...

112. Allah sets forth a parable:

... قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ...

a city enjoying security and quiet, abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place:

C2149. The reference may be to any of the cities or populations in ancient or modern times, which were favoured with security and other blessings from Allah, but which rebelled from Allah's Law and tasted the inevitable penalty, even in the midst of their iniquities.

Some Commentators see here a reference to the city of Makkah under Pagan control.

See next note.

... فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللّهِ...

yet was it ungrateful for the favors of Allah:

... فَأَذَاقَهَا اللّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَصْنَعُونَ (١١٢)

so Allah made it taste of hunger and terror (in extremes) (closing in on it) like a garment (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought.

C2150. There is a double metaphor:

- the tasting of hunger and terror after the abundant supplies and the full security which it had enjoyed; and

- the complete enfolding of the City as with a garment, by these two scourges, hunger and a state of subjective alarm.

If the reference is to Makkah shortly before its fall to the Muslims, the "hunger" was the seven years' severe famine which afflicted it, and the alarm was the constant fear in the minds of the Pagans that their day was done. Peace and prosperity were restored after the re-entry of the Prophet.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١١٣)

113. And there came to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they falsely rejected him;

so the wrath seized them even in the midst of their iniquities.

فَكُلُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّهُ حَلاَلاً طَيِّبًا...

114. So eat of the sustenance which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good;

... وَاشْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتَ اللّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ (١١٤)

and be grateful for the favors of Allah, if it is He whom ye serve.

C2151. Ingratitude for Allah's sustenance (in the literal and figurative senses) may be shown in various ways, e.g.

- by forgetting or refusing to acknowledge the true source of the bounty, viz., Allah,

- by misusing or misapplying the bounty, as by committing excesses in things lawful, or refusing to share them with others of Allah's creatures when the need arises, or

- by falsely ascribing to Allah any prohibitions we may set up for ourselves for special reasons or because Of OUT special idiosyncrasies.

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ ...

115. He has only forbidden you

C2152. Cf. 2:173 and notes, 5:3-4, and 6:121 and 138-146.

... الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخَنزِيرِ وَمَآ أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ...

- dead meat,
- and blood,
- and the flesh of swine,
- and any (food) over which the name of other than Allah has been invoked.

... فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلاَ عَادٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١١٥)

But if one is forced by necessity, without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَلاَ تَقُولُواْ لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ ...

116. But say not, for any false thing that your tongues may put forth,

C2153. Men are apt to create taboos for themselves, out of superstition, and often for selfish ends, and enforce them in the name of religion. Nothing can be more reprehensible.

... هَـذَا حَلاَلٌ وَهَـذَا حَرَامٌ...

"This is lawful, and this is forbidden,"

... لِّتَفْتَرُواْ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ...

so as to ascribe false things to Allah.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لاَ يُفْلِحُونَ (١١٦)

For those who ascribe false things to Allah, will never prosper.

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١١٧)

117. (In such falsehood) is but a paltry profit; but they will have a most grievous Penalty.

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ...

118. To the Jews We prohibited such things as We have mentioned to thee before:

C2154. See 6:146 and notes.

The further prohibitions to them were a punishment for their hardness of hearts, and not a favour.

... وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَـٰكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (١١٨)

We did them no wrong, but they were used to doing wrong to themselves.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا...

119. But verily thy Lord, to those who do wrong in ignorance, but who thereafter repent and make amends,

... إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِن بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١١٩)

thy Lord, after all this, is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C2155. See above, 16:110 and n. 2147.

The parallelism in construction confirms the suggestion of the alternative reading which is made in that note.

The similarity of expressions also rounds off the argument, as by a refrain in poetry.

What follows now in this Surah is an exhortation to right conduct.

Section 16

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِّلَّهِ حَنِيفًا...

120. Abraham was indeed a model, devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in faith,

C2156. Ummah: a model, pattern, example for imitation;

but the idea that he was an Ummah in himself, standing alone against his world, should not be lost sight of.

See next note.

... وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٢٠)

and he joined not gods with Allah:

C2157. The Gospel of Unity has been the comer-stone of spiritual Truth for all time. In this respect Abraham is the model and fountain-head for the world of western Asia and its spiritual descendants all over the world.

Abraham was among a people (the Chaldeans) who worshipped stars and had forsaken the Gospel of Unity. He was among them but not of them. He suffered persecution, and left his home and his people, and settled in the land of Canaan.

شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعُمِهِ...

121. He showed his gratitude for the favors of Allah,

... اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (١٢١)

Who chose him, and guided him to a straight way.

وَآتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً...

122. And We gave him good in this world,

... وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٢٢)

and he will be, in the Hereafter, in the ranks of the righteous.

C2158. Cf. 2:130.

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا...

123. So We have taught thee the inspired (message),

"Follow the ways of Abraham the true in faith,

... وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٢٣)

and he joined not gods with Allah."

إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُواْ فِيهِ...

124. The Sabbath was only made (strict) to those who disagreed (as to its observance);

C2159. If Abraham's Way was the right way, the Jews were ready with the taunt, "Why don't you then observe the Sabbath?"

The answer is twofold.

1. The Sabbath has nothing to do with Abraham. It was instituted with the Law of Moses because of Israel's hardness of heart (2:74); for they constantly disputed with their Prophet Moses (2:108), and there were constantly among them afterwards men who broke the Sabbath (2:65, and n. 79).

2. Which was the true Sabbath Day?

   The Jews observe Saturday.

   The Christians, who include the Old Testament in their inspired Scripture, observe Sunday, and a sect among them (the Seventh Day Adventists) disagree, and observe Saturday. So there is disagreement among the People of the Book. Let them dispute among themselves. Their dispute will not be settled till the Day of Judgment.

   Meanwhile, Muslims are emancipated from such stringent restrictions. For them there is certainly the Day of United Prayer on Friday, but it is in no sense like the Jewish or the Scotch Sabbath!

... وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُواْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٢٤)

but Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment as to their differences.

C2160. Cf. 2:113.

ادْعُ إِلِى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ...

125. Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching;

... وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ...

and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious:

C2161. In this wonderful passage are laid down principles of religious preaching, which are good for all time.

But where are the Teachers with such qualifications?

We must invite all to the Way of Allah, and expound His Universal Will; we must do it with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, which may be very narrow, or very wide.

Our preaching must be, not dogmatic, not self-regarding, not offensive, but gentle, considerate, and such as would attract their attention. Our manner and our arguments should not be acrimonious, but modeled on the most courteous and the most gracious example, so that the hearer may say to himself,

"This man is not dealing merely with dialectics; he is not trying to get a rise out of me; he is sincerely expounding the faith that is in him, and his motive is the love of man and the love of Allah."

... إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ

بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (١٢٥)

for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.

C2162. It may be that the Preacher sometimes says to himself,

"What is the use of teaching these people?

they have made up their minds, or they are obstinate; or they are only trying to catch me out,"

Let him not yield to such a thought. Who knows how the seed of the Word of Allah may germinate in people's minds? It is not for man to look for results. Man's inner thoughts are known best to Allah.

وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُم بِهِ...

126. And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out:

... وَلَئِن صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصَّابِرِينَ (١٢٦)

but if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient.

C2163. In the context this passage refers to controversies and discussions, but the words are wide enough to cover all human struggles, disputes, and fights.

In strictest equity you are not entitled to give a worse blow than is given to you. Lest you should think that such patience only gives an advantage to the adversary, you are told that the contrary is the case, the advantage is with the patient, the self-possessed, those who do not lose their temper or forget their own principles of conduct.

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلاَّ بِاللّهِ...

127. And do thou be patient, for thy patience is but from Allah;

C2164. In the previous verse are laid down the principles of conduct in controversy for all Muslims;

'if you catch them out, you are not entitled to strike a heavier blow than you received, but it is better to restrain yourself and be patient.'

There patience was recommended.

In this verse a command is directly addressed to the Prophet. 'Do thou be patient.'

It is a command: his standard as the Great Teacher is much higher; and he carried out in his life.

His patience and self-restraint were under circumstances of extraordinary provocation. In his human wisdom it may sometimes have seemed questionable whether forbearance and self-restraint might not be human weaknesses; he had to defend his people as well as himself against the enemy's persecutions.

He is told here that he need not entertain any such fears. Patience (with constancy) in those circumstances was in accordance with Allah's own command.

Nor was he to grieve if they rejected Allah's Message-, the Prophet had done his duty when he boldly and openly proclaimed it.

Nor was his heart to be troubled if they hatched secret plots against himself and his people, Allah would protect them.

... وَلاَ تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ (١٢٧)

nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots.

إِنَّ اللّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَواْ وَّالَّذِينَ هُم مُّحْسِنُونَ (١٢٨)

128. For Allah is with those

- who restrain themselves,
- and those who do good.

C2165. And the Surah ends with the highest consolation which the righteous can receive; the assurance that Allah is with them. A double qualification is indicated for so high an honour,

- that they should not yield to human passion or anger or impatience, and
- that they should go on with constancy doing good all around them. To attain to the Presence of Allah in the sense of "I am with you" is the culmination of the righteous man's aspiration.

إِنَّ هَـٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ

Verily this Qur'án doth guide to that which is most right (or stable),

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Bani Israel

بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

Introduction and Summary

In the gradation of spiritual teaching (see Introduction to Surah 8), we saw that the first seven Surahs sketched the early spiritual history of man, and led up to the formation of the new Ummah of Islam Surah 8 to 16 formed another series dealing with the formation of the new Ummah and its consolidation, and Allah's dealing with man taken as an Ummah and considered, in his social relation in original communities (see Introduction to Surahs 8, 10, and 16). We now come to a fresh series, (Surahs 17-29), which may be considered in three parts.

- Surahs 17-21 begin with an allusion to the Mi'raj (of which more later), and proceed to spiritual history as touching individuals rather than nations. The old prophets and stories of the past are now referred to from this point of view.

- Surahs 22-25 refer to Hajj (pilgrimage), worship and prayer, chastity, privacy, etc, as related to a man's individual spiritual growth.

- Surahs 26-29 go back to the old prophets and stories of the past, as illustrating the growth of the individual soul in its reactions against the lives of the communities and the reactions of the communities to the lives of its great individual souls.

Let us now consider Surah 17, by itself. It opens with the mystic Vision of the Ascension of the Holy Prophet; he was transported from the Sacred Mosque (of Makkah) to the Farthest Mosque (of Jerusalem) in a night and shown some of the Signs of Allah. The majorities of Commentators takes this Night Journey literally, but allow that there were other occasions on which a spiritual Journey on Vision occurred. Even on the supposition of a miraculous bodily Journey, it is conceded that the body was almost transformed into spiritual fineness. The Hadith literature gives details of this Journey and its study helps to elucidate its meaning.

The Holy Prophet was first transported to the seat of the earlier revelations in Jerusalem, and then taken through the seven heavens even to the Sublime Throne, and initiated into the spiritual mysteries of the human soul struggling in Space and Time. The Spaniard, Miguiel Asin, Arabic Professor in the University of Madrid, has shown that this Mi'raj literature has a great influence on the Mediaeval literature of Europe, and especially on the great Italians poem, the Divine Comedy (or Drama) of Danie, which towers a landmark in mediaeval European literature.

The reference to this great mystic story of the Mi'raj is a fitting prelude to the journey of the human soul in its spiritual growth in life. The first steps in such growth must be through moral conduct-the reciprocal rights of parents and children, kindness

to our fellow-men, courage and firmness in the hour of danger, and sense of personal responsibility, and a sense of Allah's Presence through prayer and praise.

The Mi'raj is usually dated to 27th night of the month of Rajab (though other dates, e.g. 17th Rabi 1, are also given) in the year before the Hijrah. This fixes the date of the opening verse of the Surah, through portions of the Surah may have been a little earlier.

Summery- The spiritual experiences of the Prophets of Allah are given in order that Allah's Signs may be made clear to men: man is misled into evil, and must be guided to a sense of personal responsibility (17:1-22, and C. 128). (R).

Our service to Allah is shown also in our human relations, goodness to parents and kinsmen and strangers in want, as well as kindness to children, purity in sex relations, justice and respect for human life, protection of orphans, probity in all dealings, and avoidance of arrogance (17:23-40, and C. 129).

Allah's glory is above all comparison, and the reception of His revelation marks off the man of faith from those who do not believe. But the Believers should speak fair and avoid dissensions, for Allah doth encompass all men (17:41-60, and C. 130).

Pride caused the fall of Iblis, but the children of Adam have been raised in excellence above other Creation. They will be judged by their deeds. Prayer is good at stated times and at night, and the Quran is offered as healing and mercy (17:61-84, and C. 131).

Inspiration (the Quran) is a Sign of Allah's grace, and men should accept it without making carping excuses. Be humble in prayer and praise (17:85-111, and C. 132).

C.128 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:1-22)

It is privilege of the men of God
To see the sublimest mysteries
Of the spiritual world and instruct men
In Righteousness; they warn and shield men
Against Evil. But nothing can lessen
Each soul's personal responsibility
For its own deeds. It carries its fate
Round its own neck. Allah's gifts
Are for all, but not all receive
The same gifts, nor are all gifts
Of equal dignity or excellence.



سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلاً ...

1. Glory to (Allah) Who did take His Servant for Journey by night

C2166. The reference is to the Isra' for which see the Introduction to this Surah.

... مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ...

from the Sacred Mosque

C2167. Masjid is a place of prayer: here it refers to the Ka'bah at Makkah. It had not yet been cleared of its idols and rededicated exclusively to the One True God. It was symbolical of the new Message which was being given to mankind.

... إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الأَقْصَى...

to the Farthest Mosque,

C2168. The Farthest Mosque must refer to the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem on the hill of Moriah, at or near which stands the Dome of the Rock, called also the Mosque of Hadhrat 'Umar. This and the Mosque known as the Farthest Mosque (Masjid-ul-Aqsa) were completed by the Amir 'Abd Allah Malik in A.H. 68.

Farthest, because it was the place of worship farthest west which was known to the Arabs in the time of the holy Prophet: it was a sacred place to both Jews and Christians, but the Christians then had the upper hand, as it was included in the Byzantine (Roman) Empire, which maintained a Patriarch at Jerusalem.

The chief dates in connection with the Temple are:

- it was finished by Solomon about B.C. 1004;
- destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar about 586 B.C.;
- rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah about 515 B.C.;
- turned into a heathen idol-temple by one of Alexander's successors, Antiochus Epiphanes, 167 B.C.;
- restored by Herod, B.C. 17 to A.D. 29;
- and completely razed to the ground by the Emperor Titus in A.D. 70.

These ups and downs are among the greater Signs in religious history.

...الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا...

whose precincts We did Bless -- in order that We might show him some of Our Signs:

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ البَصِيرُ (١)

for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).

C2169. Allah's knowledge comprehends all things, without any curtain of Time or any separation of Space. He can therefore see and hear all things, and the Mi'raj was a reflection of this knowledge.

In this and the subsequent verses, the reference to Allah is generally in the first person and plural.

But in the first and the last clause of this verse it is in the third person singular: "Glory to Allah, Who did take His Servant ..... ; "He is the One ....."

In each of these two instances, the clause expresses the point of view of Allah's creatures, who glorify Him, and whose hearing and seeing are ordinarily so limited that they can do nothing but glorify Him when one of His creatures is raised up to hear and see the Signs. It is they who glorify Him. (R).

وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ...

2. We gave Moses the Book,

C2170. The Book: the revelation that was given to Moses.

It was there clearly laid down that those who followed Moses must consider Allah as the Only God.

> "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image ..... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God .... ;" etc. (Exod. 20:3-5).
>
> These are the words of the English Bible.

As a matter of fact the spirit of the Mosaic teaching went further. It referred all things to the Providence of Allah: Allah is the Disposer of all affairs, and we are to look to none but Him. This is Islam, and the Mi'raj showed that it was the teaching of Allah from the most ancient times, and yet it was violated by the very people who claimed to be its custodians.

وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَلاَّ تَتَّخِذُواْ مِن دُونِي وَكِيلاً (٢)...

and made it a Guide to the Children of Israel, (commanding):

"Take not other than Me as Disposer of (your) affairs."

C2171. Note the transition from "We" in the first clause to **"Me"** in the second clause.

- The first clause refers to the majesty of Allah as the Heavenly King;
- the second clause refers to His personal interest in all our affairs.

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ ...

3. O ye that are sprung from those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah!

C2172. After the Deluge of the time of Noah the only descendants of Noah were those who were saved in the Ark with him. They had special reason to celebrate the praises of Allah. But they relapsed into idolatry, sin, and abominations.

They are reminded of the true and sincere devotion of Noah himself, as contrasted with the unworthiness of Noah's descendants, especially the Children of Israel.

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا (٣)

Verily he was a devotee most grateful.

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ ...

4. And We gave (clear) warning to the Children of Israel in the Book,

C2173. The Book is the revelation given to the Children of Israel.

Here it seems to refer to the burning words of Prophets like Isaiah. For example,

see Isaiah, chap, 24.

or Isaiah 5:20-30,

or Isaiah 3:16-26.

... لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ...

that twice would they do mischief on the earth

C2174. What are the two occasions referred to?

It may be that "twice" is a figure of speech for "more than once", "often".

Or it may be that the two occasions refer to;

- the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when the Jews were carried off into captivity,
- and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, after which the Temple was never re-built.

  See n. 2168 above.

  On both occasions it was a judgment of Allah for the sins of the Jews, their backslidings, and their arrogance.

...وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا (٤)

and be elated with mighty arrogance (and twice would they be punished)!

...فَإِذَا جَاء وَعْدُ أُولاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَا أُوْلِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ...

5. When the first of the warnings came to pass, We sent against you Our servants given to terrible warfare:

C2175. A good description of the war-like Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonians.

They were servants of Allah in the sense that they were instruments through which the wrath of Allah was poured out on the Jews, for they penetrated through their lands, their Temple, and their homes, and carried away the Jews, men and women, into captivity.

As regards "the daughters of Zion" see the scathing condemnation in Isaiah, 3:16-26.

...فَجَاسُواْ خِلاَلَ الدِّيَارِ...

They entered the very inmost parts of your homes;

...وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولاً (٥)

and it was a warning (completely) fulfilled.

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

6. Then did We grant you the Return as against them:

C2176. The return of the Jews from the Captivity was about 520 B.C.

They started life afresh. They rebuilt their Temple. They carried out various reforms and built up a new Judaism in connection with Ezra. See appendix II following Surah 5.

For a time they prospered. Meanwhile their old oppressors the Babylonians had been absorbed by Persia. Subsequently Persia was absorbed in Alexander's Empire. The whole of western Asia was Helienized, and the new school of Jews was Helienized also, and had a strong centre in Alexandria.

But their footing in Palestine continued, and under the Asmonaean Dynasty (B.C. 167-63), they had a national revival, and the names of the Makkah bees are remembered as those of heroes.

Another dynasty, that of the Idummaeans, (B.C. 63 to B.C. 4), to which Herod belonged, also enjoyed some semi-independent power. The scepter of Syria (including Palestine) passed to the Romans in B.C. 65, and Jewish feudatory Kings held power under them. But the Jews again showed a stiff-necked resistance to Allah's Messenger in the time of Jesus, and the inevitable doom followed in the complete and final destruction of the Temple under Titus in 70 A.C.

... وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُم بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ...

We gave you increase in resources and sons,

...وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا (٦)

and made you the more numerous in manpower.

إِنْ أَحْسَنتُمْ أَحْسَنتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا...

7. If ye did well, ye did well for yourselves;
if ye did evil, (ye did it) against yourselves;

C2177. This is a parenthetical sentence. If anyone follows Allah's Law, the benefit goes to himself: he does not bestow a favour on anyone else.

Similarly evil brings its own recompense on the doer of evil.

...فَإِذَا جَاء وَعْدُ الآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوؤُواْ وُجُوهَكُمْ ...

so when the second of the warnings came to pass, (We permitted your enemies) to disfigure your faces,

C2178. The second doom was due to the rejection of the Message of Jesus.

"To disfigure your faces" means to destroy any credit or power you may have got:

the face shows the personality of the man.

... وَلِيَدْخُلُواْ الْمَسْجِدَ...

and to enter your Temple

C2179. Titus's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was complete. He was a son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and at the date of the destruction of Jerusalem, had the title of Caesar as heir to throne.

He ruled as Roman Emperor from 79 to 81 A.D.

...كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُواْ مَا عَلَوْاْ تَتْبِيرًا (٧)

as they had entered it before,

and to visit with destruction all that fell into their power.

C2180. Merivale in his Romans Under the Empire gives a graphic account of the siege and final destruction (ed. 1890, 7:221-255).

The population of Jerusalem was then 200,000. According to the Latin historian Tacitus it was as much as 600,000.

There was a famine and there were massacres. There was much fanaticism. The judgment of Merivale is:

"They" (the Jews) "were judicially abandoned to their own passions and the punishment which naturally awaited them". (7:221).

عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَرْحَمَكُمْ...

8. It may be that your Lord may (yet) show Mercy unto you;

C2181. Now we come to the time of our holy Prophet.

In spite of all the past, the Jews could still have obtained Allah's forgiveness if they had not obstinately rejected the greatest of the Prophets also.

If they were to continue in their sins, Allah's punishment would also continue to visit them.

...وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا...

but if ye revert (to your sins), We shall revert (to Our punishments):

...وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا (٨)

and We have made Hell a prison for those who reject (all Faith).

C2182. There is such a thing as disgrace in this life, but the final disgrace is in the Hereafter, and that will be irretrievable.

Notice that the allegorical reference to Jewish history, when brought into relation with the true meaning of Mi'raj, refers to the constant struggle of the individual soul against evil. It has its setbacks and its punishments. But if it is true to itself and is true to the Faith in Allah, Allah will give it strength and make it successful in its fight against evil. For Allah's Mercy is unbounded and comes to suffering humanity again and again. (R).

إِنَّ هَـٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ يِهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ...

9. Verily this Qur'án doth guide to that which is most right (or stable),

C2183. The instability and crookedness of the Jewish soul having been mentioned, the healing balm which should have cured it is now pointed out.

The Message of the Quran is for all.

- Those who have Faith and show that Faith in their conduct must reap their spiritual reward.
- But those who reject Faith cannot escape punishment.

Apart from what is past, apart from questions of national or racial history, there is a Hope, -and a Danger- for every soul.

...وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا (٩)

and giveth the glad tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward;

وأَنَّ الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٠)

10. And to those who believe not in the Hereafter, (it announceth) that We have prepared for them a Penalty grievous (indeed).

Section 2

...وَيَدْعُ الإِنسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءهُ بِالْخَيْرِ

11. The prayer that man should make for good, he maketh for evil:

C2184. Man in his ignorance or haste mistakes evil for good, and desires what he should not have.

The wise and instructed soul has patience and does not put its own desires above the wisdom of Allah. He receives with contentment the favours of Allah, and prays to be rightly guided in his desires and petitions.

...وَكَانَ الإِنسَانُ عَجُولاً (١١)

for man is given to hasty (deeds).

...وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَتَيْنِ

12. We have made the Night and the Day as two (of Our) Signs:

C2185. If we were to cry when it is night, we shall look foolish when it is day; for the night is but a preparation

for the day: perhaps, as the last verse says, we pray for the day when we want rest for the night.

Both are Signs from Allah.

Darkness and light stand for

- ignorance and
- knowledge.

"Where ignorance is bliss, its folly to be wise."

Darkness and light may also stand for

- shadow and sunshine,
- sorrow and joy:

both may be for our development.

...فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً...

the Sign of the Night have We obscured, while the Sign of the day We have made to enlighten you;

...لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلاً مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ...

that ye may seek Bounty from your Lord, and that ye may know the number and count of the years:

C2186. By the physical light we see physical facts. And this physical gift of Allah is good for us in two ways:

1. we can arrange for our livelihood, or we can attain the knowledge of the physical sciences and gain some control over the physical forces of nature; and
2. the daily rising and setting of the sun gives us the computation of days and years, for the physical natural year is the solar year. But there is spiritual light even more precious; by it we can similarly attain two objects, viz,
   - our spiritual livelihood and knowledge, and
   - our computation of the stages we reach in our spiritual years.

Let us be patient and seek everything as from Allah - in joy and in sorrow, in knowledge and in want of knowledge of those things which are above us.

Let us rejoice in what Allah has given us, and not be impatient about those things which He in His wisdom has thought fit to withhold from us. But all things should be sought and striven for under the guidance of the All-Knowing Allah.

...وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ تَفْصِيلاً (١٢)

all things have We explained in detail.

...وَكُلَّ إِنسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَآئِرَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ

13. Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck:

C2187. Fate: Tair, literally a bird, hence an omen, an evil omen, fate.

Cf. 36:19.

The Arabs, like the ancient Romans, sought to read the mysteries of human fate from the flight of birds. And many of us in our own day seek to read our future fortunes by similar superstitions.

We read in the previous verse that there are Signs of Allah, but they are not meant to subserve the vulgar purpose of disclosing our future destiny in a worldly sense. They are meant for quite other purposes, as we have explained.

Our real fate does not depend upon birds or omens or stars. It depends on our deeds; good or evil, and they hang round our necks. (R).

...وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا (١٣)

on the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will see spread open.

C2188. These deeds, good or evil, will be embodied in a scroll which will be quite open to us in the light of the Day of Judgment, however much we may affect to be ignorant of it now or waste our energies in prying into mysteries that do not concern us.

اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَى بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا (١٤)

14. (It will be said to him:) "Read thine (own) record: sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee."

C2189. Our true accusers are our own deeds.

Why not look to them instead of vainly prying into something superstitious which we call a book of fortune or a book of omens?

مَّنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ...

15. Who receiveth guidance, receiveth it for his own benefit:

...وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا...

who goeth astray doth so to his own loss:

C2190. The doctrine of personal responsibility is insisted on, and the basis of ethics is shown to be our own good or evil as furthering or obstructing our highest development.

...وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى...

no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another:

C2191. The doctrine of vicarious atonement is condemned. Salvation for the wicked cannot be attained by the punishment of the innocent.

One man cannot bear the burden of another: that would be unjust. Every man must bear his own personal responsibility. Cf. 6:164.

But Allah never visits His wrath on anyone until due warning is conveyed to him through an accredited messenger.

...وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّى نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا (١٥)

nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We had sent a Messenger (to give warning).

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَن نُّهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا...

16. When We decide to destroy a population, We (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life and yet transgress;

C2192. Allah's Mercy gives every chance to the wicked to repent. When wickedness gets so rampant that punishment becomes inevitable, even then Allah's Mercy and Justice act together.

Those who are highly gifted from Allah -it may be with wealth or position, or it may be with talents and opportunities- are expected to understand and obey. They are given a definite order and warning. If they still transgress there is no further room for argument. They cannot plead that they were ignorant. The command of the Lord is proved against them, and its application is called for beyond doubt. Then it is that their punishment is completed.

...فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا (١٦)

so that the word is proved true against them: then (it is) We destroy them utterly.

C2193. Qaul here has the sense of word, order, law, charge framed against one under a definite law.

...وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِن بَعْدِ نُوحٍ

17. How many generations have We destroyed after Noah?

C2194. Noah's Flood is taken as a new starting point in history. But even after that hundreds of empires, towns, and generations have perished for their wickedness.

...وَكَفَى بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا (١٧)

And enough is thy Lord to note and see the sins of His servants.

C2195. Let not the wicked think, because they are given a lease of life and luxury for a time, that their wickedness has escaped notice.

Allah notes and sees all things, both open and secret. He knows the hidden motives and thoughts of men, and He has no need of any other evidence. His knowledge and sight are all-sufficient.

مَّن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَن نُّرِيدُ...

18. If any do wish for the transitory things (of this life), We readily grant them -- such things as We will, to such persons as We will:

C2196. An explanation is now given of how it is that prosperity sometimes seems to attend the wicked.

The explanation is threefold:

1. the transitory things of this life are worth little in the eternal scheme of things;
2. even they are provided, not just because their recipients wish for them, but according to a definite Plan of Allah; and
3. in the end there is for the wicked the eternal Misery and deprivation of grace,-the Hell which is worse than destruction in the terms of this world.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَّدْحُورًا (١٨)...

in the end have We provided Hell for them:

they will burn therein, disgraced and rejected.

C2197. All the pride and insolence will then be brought low. The disgrace and the exclusion from the "sight of the Face of Allah" will by themselves be punishments of which the magnitude cannot be measured in the terms of our present material life.

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الآخِرَةَ ...

19. Those who do wish for the (things of) the Hereafter,

C2198. This is in contrast to the last verse.

Those who wish for mere earthly good sometimes get it and misuse it. Those whose eyes are fixed on the Hereafter, they too share in their Lord's bounty provided they fulfil the conditions explained in the next note; but their wishes and endeavours are more acceptable in the sight of Allah.

... وَسَعَى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ...

and strive therefor with all due striving, and have Faith --

C2199. A mere wish for moral and spiritual good is not enough. It must be backed up by hard endeavour and supported by a lively Faith. On those conditions the wishes are accepted by Allah.

...فَأُولَئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُم مَّشْكُورًا (١٩)

they are the ones whose striving is acceptable (to Allah).

...كُلاًّ نُّمِدُّ هَـؤُلاء وَهَـؤُلاء مِنْ عَطَاء رَبِّكَ

20. Of the bounties of thy Lord We bestow freely on all -- these as well as those:

...وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاء رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا (٢٠)

the bounties of thy Lord are not closed (to anyone).

C2200. Allah's favours are showered on all,

- the just and the unjust,
- the deserving and the undeserving.

But there is a difference as explained in the last two verses.

...انظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

21. See how We have bestowed more on some than on others;

...وَلَلآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلاً (٢١)

but verily the Hereafter is more in rank and gradation and more in excellence.

C2201. Nor should man suppose that all gifts are of equal value. The spiritual ones rank far higher in dignity and real worth than the transitory ones. Therefore it is altogether wrong to compare the worldly prosperity of a wicked man with the apparent want of it to a man of spiritual worth.

There is no comparison between them when measured by right standards.

لاَ تَجْعَل مَعَ اللّهِ إِلـهًا آخَرَ ...

22. Take not with Allah another object of worship;

C2202. The seeming inequality of gifts to men might make short-sighted men impugn the impartiality of Allah. But the fault lies with such men's own want of knowledge and want of Faith. There is no excuse for them to seek other objects of worship than Allah. For there is none worthy of worship except Allah.

... فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُولاً (٢٢)

or thou (O man!) wilt sit in disgrace and destitution.

C2203. If foolish men turn to false objects of worship, they will not only be disappointed, but they will lose the respect of their own fellow-men, and spiritually they will be reduced to destitution. All their talents and their works will be of no avail.

C.129 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:23-40)

To be worthy of the service of the One True God.
We must love and serve His Creatures
The parents who cherished us in childhood
Deserve our humble reverence and service; next
Come the rights of kinsmen, those in want,
And wayfaring strangers; to each
According to his need, not in spendthrift show
And gentleness is needed to those whom we
Cannot help. Allah will provide. He hs made
Life sacred and pure. Fulfil your trusts
For orphans and deal with all in strictest
Probity. Pry not into evil from curiosity,
And shun insolence: for Allah hates evil-
The One, the Good, the Universal Lord!

Section 3

وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُوا إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا...

23. Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents.

...إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِندَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلاَهُمَا ...

Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life,

C2204. The spiritual and moral duties are now brought into juxtaposition.

We are to worship none but Allah, because none but Allah is worthy of worship, not because "the Lord thy God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me" (Exod. 20:5).

Note that the act of worship may be collective as well as individual; hence the plural **ta'buda.**

The kindness to parents is an individual act of piety; hence the singular **taqul**, **qul**, etc.

... فَلاَ تَقُل لَّهُمَآ أُفٍّ وَلاَ تَنْهَرْهُمَا...

say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them,

...وَقُل لَّهُمَا قَوْلاً كَرِيمًا (٢٣)

but address them in terms of honor.

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُل...

24. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say:

C2205. Cf. 15:88 and n. 2011.

The metaphor is that of a high-flying bird which lowers her wing out of tenderness to her offspring. There is a double aptness.

1. When the parent was strong and the child was helpless, parental affection was showered on the child:

when the child grows up and is strong, and the parent is helpless, can he do less than bestow similar tender care on the parent?

2. But more: he must approach the matter with gentle humility: for does not parental love, remind him of the great love with which Allah cherishes His creatures?

   There is something here more than simple human gratitude; it goes up into the highest spiritual region.

رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (٢٤)...

"My Lord! bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."

C2206. Note that we are asked to honour our father and mother, not "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exod. 20:12), but upon much higher and more universal grounds, such as befit a perfected revelation.

- In the first place, not merely respect, but cherishing kindness, and humility to parents, are commanded.
- In the second place, this command is bracketed with the command to worship the One True God.

Parental love should be to us a type of divine love: nothing that we can do can ever really compensate for that which we have received.

In the third place (see next verse) our spiritual advancement is tested by this: we cannot expect Allah's forgiveness if we are rude or unkind to those who unselfishly brought us up.

رَّبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ...

25. Your Lord knoweth best what is in your hearts:

إِن تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا (٢٥)...

if ye do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again (in true penitence).

C2207. It is the heart, and its hidden and secret motives, by which we are judged: for Allah knows them all.

وَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَى حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ...

26. And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer:

C2208. In the Jewish Decalogue, which was given to a primitive and hard-hearted people, this refinement of Kindness, -to those in want and to wayfarers (i.e., total strangers whom you come across) finds no place.

Nor was there much danger of their wasting their substance out of exuberance. Even the command "to honour thy father and mother" comes after the ceremonial observance of the Sabbath.

With us, the worship of Allah is linked up with kindness;

- to parents, kindred,
- those in want,
- those who are far from their homes though they may be total strangers to us.

It is not mere verbal kindness. They have certain rights which must be fulfilled.

وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا (٢٦)...

but squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift.

C2209. All charity, kindness, and help are conditioned by our own resources. There is no merit if we merely spend out of bravado or for idle show.

How many families are ruined by extravagant expenses at weddings, funerals, etc., or (as they may call it) to "oblige friends or relatives", or to give to able-bodied beggars?

To no one was this command more necessary than it is to Muslims of the present day.

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ...

27. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones;

...وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا (٢٧)

and the Evil One is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful.

C2210. Spendthrifts are not merely fools. They are of the same family as the Satan.

And the Satan himself-fell by his ingratitude to Allah. So those who misuse or squander Allah's gifts are also ungrateful to Allah.

وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمُ ابْتِغَاء رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا...

28. And even if thou hast to turn away from them in pursuit of the Mercy from thy Lord which thou dost expect,

...فَقُل لَّهُمْ قَوْلاً مَّيْسُورًا (٢٨)

yet speak to them a word of easy kindness.

C2211. You may have to **"turn away"** from people for two reasons.

- You may not have the wherewithal with which to entertain them and give them their rights; or
- you may have to give them a wide berth because their thoughts are not as your thoughts.

In either case there is no need to speak harshly to them. Your words should be those of **"easy kindness"**, i.e., the sort of kindness (not merely frigid politeness) which flows from pity and understanding and smoothes over unnecessary difficulties in human intercourse.

وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَى عُنُقِكَ...

29. Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck,

C2212. Cf. the phrase for niggardliness in 5:64.

We are not to be so lavish as to make ourselves destitute and incur the just censure of wise men, nor is it

becoming to keep back our resources from the just needs of those who have a right to our help. Even strangers have such a right, as we saw in 17:26 above. But we must keep a just measure between our capacity and other people's needs.

...وَلاَ تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا (٢٩)

nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ

30. Verily thy Lord doth provide sustenance in abundance for whom He pleaseth, and He provideth in a just measure:

C2213. If a foolish spendthrift pretends that his generosity, even if it ruins himself, is good for other people, he is reminded that Allah will take care of all. He knows every one's true needs and cares for them.

He gives in abundance to some, but in all cases He gives in just measure. Who are we to pretend to greater generosity! (R).

إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا (٣٠)

for He doth know and regard all His servants.

Section 4

...وَلاَ تَقْتُلُواْ أَوْلاَدَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلاَقٍ

31. Kill not your children for fear of want:

C2214. The Arabs were addicted to female infanticide. In a society perpetually at war a son was a source of strength whereas a daughter was a source of weakness. Even now infanticide is not unknown in other countries for economic reasons.

This crime against children's lives is here characterized as one of the greatest of sins.

...نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُم...

We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you:

...إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْءًا كَبِيرًا (٣١)

verily the killing of them is a great sin.

وَلاَ تَقْرَبُواْ الزِّنَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاء سَبِيلاً (٣٢)

32. Nor come nigh to adultery:

for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).

C2215. Adultery is not only shameful in itself and inconsistent with any self-respect or respect for others, but it opens the road to many evils.

- It destroys the basis of the family:
- it works against the interests of children born or to be born;
- it may cause murders and feuds and loss of reputation and property, and also loosen permanently the bonds of society.

Not only should it be avoided as a sin, but any approach or temptation to it should be avoided.

وَلاَ تَقْتُلُواْ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللّهُ إِلاَّ بِالحَقِّ...

33. Nor take life -- which Allah has made sacred -- except for just cause.

...وَمَن قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لِوَلِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا ...

And if anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority (to demand Qisas or to forgive):

C2216. On the subject of Qisas see 2:178 and the notes thereto.

Under the strict limitations there laid down, a life may be taken for a life. The heir is given the right to demand the life; but he must not exceed due bounds, because he is helped by the Law.

Some Commentators understand "he" in **"he is helped (by the Law)"** to refer to the heir of the person against whom Qisas is sought. He too will be helped by the Law, if the heir of the first slain exceeds the 'bounds of Law.

... فَلاَ يُسْرِف فِّي الْقَتْلِ...

but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life:

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا (٣٣)

for he is helped (by the Law).

... وَلاَ تَقْرَبُواْ مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلاَّ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ...

34. Come not nigh to the orphan's property except to improve it,

C2217. Cf. 6:152, and other passages relating to orphans, e.g., 2:220.

If an orphan's property is touched at all, it should be to improve it, or to give him something better than he had before,

- never to take a personal advantage for the benefit of the guardian.

A bargain that may be quite fair as between two independent persons would be, under this verse, unfair as between a guardian and his orphan ward until the latter attains the full age of understanding.

... حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ...

until he attains the age of full strength;

C2218. Ashuddahu means the age when the orphan reaches his full maturity of strength and understanding, say between the ages of 18 and 30.

The age of legal maturity may be 18 (as for certain purposes in India) or 21 (as in England). For certain purposes in Muslim law it may be less than 18.

In the orphan's interest a much stricter standard is required in his case.

...وَأَوْفُواْ بِالْعَهْدِ ...

and fulfil (every) engagement, for (every)

C2219. The definite article al has here a generic meaning, and is best translated by "every".

... إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْؤُولاً (٣٤)

engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).

C2220. From the context the engagements referred to would relate to beneficial contracts connected with the orphan's property or promises or undertakings given by the guardian or implied in the terms of his appointment. But the words are general and may be interpreted in the general sense.

Note that this sentence does not occur in the similar passage in 6:152, where there was a discussion of social laws: it is appropriate here, where the discussion is about the guardian's personal and individual responsibility in a spiritual sense.

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذا كِلْتُمْ وَزِنُوا بِالقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ...

35. Give full measure when ye measure, and weigh with a balance that is straight:

...ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلاً (٣٥)

that is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination.

C2221. Giving just measure and weight is not only right in itself but is ultimately to the best advantage of the person who gives it.

وَلاَ تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

36. And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge;

C2222. Idle curiosity may lead us to nose into evil, through our ignorance that it is evil. We must guard against every such danger.

We must only hear the things that are known to us to be of good report, and see things that are good and instructive and entertain in our hearts feelings or in our minds ideas that we have reason to expect will be spiritually profitable to us. We shall be called to account for the exercise of every faculty that has been given to us.

This goes a little farther than a famous sculpture on a Japanese temple in which three monkeys are shown as putting their hands to their ears, eyes, and mouths, respectively, to show that they were not prepared to hear any evil, or see any evil, or speak any evil.

Here idle curiosity is condemned. Futility is to be avoided even if it does not reach the degree of positive evil.

...إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَـئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْؤُولاً (٣٦)

for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).

...وَلاَ تَمْشِ فِي الأَرْضِ مَرَحًا

37. Nor walk on the earth with insolence:

C2223. Insolence, or arrogance, or undue elation at our powers or capacities, is the first step to many evils. Besides, it is unjustified. All our gifts are from Allah.

...إِنَّكَ لَن تَخْرِقَ الأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولاً (٣٧)

for thou canst not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height.

كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا (٣٨)

38. Of all such things the evil is hateful in the sight of thy Lord.

...ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ

39. These are among the (precepts of) wisdom, which thy Lord Has revealed to thee.

C2224. The moral law, as expounded in 17:23-39 is far in advance of the bare Decalogue in that it searches out motives, and draws pointed attention to the weak and helpless if we are to reach any real understanding of Allah.

It begins with a mention of the worship of Allah, the One True God and ends with a similar mention to close the argument, thus emphasizing the fact that the love of Allah embraces the love of man and practical help of our fellow-creatures. (R).

وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّهِ إِلَـهًا آخَرَ فَتُلْقَى فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا (٣٩)...

Take not, with Allah, another object of worship, lest thou shouldst be thrown into Hell, blameworthy and rejected.

C2225. **"Blameworthy"** carries us back by reminiscence to 17:29, between which and this verse there is mention of crimes committed out of covetousness and a selfish disregard of other people's rights.

"Rejected" carries back our reminiscence to 17:18, from which to here we have a reference to crimes that lead to deprivation of Allah's grace.

The latter is of course wider than the former. Note how subtly the two streams of thought are here conjoined.

أَفَأَصْفَاكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلآئِكَةِ إِنَاثًا...

40. Has then your Lord, (O Pagans!) preferred for you sons, and taken for Himself daughters among the angels?

C2226. Cf. 16:57-59.

Insistence on true worship means also exclusion of false worship or worship derogatory to Allah.

In circles where daughters were despised and even their lives had to be protected by special legislation, what could have been dreadful than ascribing daughters to Allah?

إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلاً عَظِيمًا (٤٠)...

Truly ye utter a most dreadful saying!

C.130 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:41-60)

There is none like unto Allah, Exalted
Beyond measure is He. All Creation
Declares His glory. His revelation

Is Truth, but is beyond comprehension
To those who believe not in the Hereafter.
Those who serve Him should beware
Lest words unseemly should escape them,
Whether to friend or foe. Avoid
Dissensions, and know that Allah's Wrath
When kindled is a terrible thing
But we rejoice that He forbears and forgives.

Section 5

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَـذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُواْ...

41. We have explained (things) in various (ways) in this Qur'án, in order that they may receive admonition,

C2227. Things are explained in the Quran from all points of view, individual and national, by means of stories, parables, and figures of speech, and by way of categorical commands.

But those who are evil, instead of profiting by such instruction, often go farther and farther away from the Truth.

...وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلاَّ نُفُورًا (٤١)

but it only increases their flight (from the Truth)!

قُل لَّوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذًا لاَّبْتَغَوْاْ إِلَى ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلاً (٤٢)

42. Say:

if there had been (other) gods with Him -- as they say -- behold, they would certainly have sought out a way to the Lord of the Throne!

C2228. There is only One True God. But if, as polytheists say, there had been subsidiary gods, they would yet have had to submit to the Throne of the Supreme God, for they could have done nothing without Him. Thus the Islamic idea of the unity of the Godhead is quite different from the polytheistic ideas of a supreme

god, as in the Greek Pantheon, where Jupiter was often defied by the minor deities! But such ideas are absurd, as stated in the next verse.

سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا (٤٣)

43. Glory to Him!

He is high above all that they say! -- Exalted and Great (beyond measure)!

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهِنَّ...

44. The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory:

...وَإِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلاَّ يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدَهِ وَلَـكِن لاَّ تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ...

there not a thing but celebrates His praise; and yet ye understand not how they declare His glory!

C2229. All Creation, animate and inanimate, sings Allah's praises and celebrates His glory,

- animate, with consciousness, and
- inanimate, in the evidence which it furnishes of the unity and glory of Allah.

All Nature bears witness to His power, wisdom, and goodness. It is only **"ye"**, i.e., those who reject the whole trend of your nature and deny Faith simply because ye have been given a limited amount of choice and free-will,

- it is only such as "ye" that understand not what every other creature understands and proclaims with joy and pride.

What must be your degradation! And yet Allah bears with you and forgives you! Such is His goodness! (R).

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا (٤٤)

Verily He is Oft-Forbearing, Most Forgiving!

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ

حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا (٤٥)

45. When thou dost recite the Qur'án, We put, between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter, a veil invisible:

C2230. Veil invisible: Some Commentators understand **mastur** here as equivalent to satir: a veil that makes invisible, a thick or dark veil.

But I think that the meaning of **mastur** (in the passive voice) as "hidden or invisible" is more consonant with the whole passage.

If all nature, external and within ourselves, declares Allah's glory, those unfortunate who cut themselves off from their better nature are isolated from the true servants of Allah and the revelation of Allah, because;

- they are unfit for being in their company, and
- because the servants of Allah and the revelation of Allah must be protected from the pain which blasphemy or rebellion must cause to their unsullied nature.

The veil is none the less real even though it is invisible. (R).

وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَن يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا...

46. And We put coverings over their hearts (and minds) lest they should understand the Qur'án, and deafness into their ears:

C2231. The invisible veil being put against the ungodly on account of their deliberate rejection of Truth, the result is that their minds are fogged so that they cannot understand and their ears are clogged so that they cannot hear.

In other words the effects of Evil become cumulative in shutting out Allah's grace.

...وَإِذَا ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ وَلَّوْا عَلَى أَدْبَارِهِمْ نُفُورًا (٤٦)

when thou dost commemorate thy Lord -- and Him alone -- in the Qur'án, they turn on their backs, fleeing (from the Truth).

نَّحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ ...

47. We know best why it is they listen, when they listen to thee;

C2232. See last note.

That being so, the only motive for the ungodly to listen to Allah's Truth is to scoff at it instead of to be instructed by it. They may make a show of listening, but when they meet together in private, they show themselves in their true colours. Cf. 2:14.

They cannot help seeing that there is singular charm and attractiveness in Allah's Word, and that it consoles, helps, and elevates many people who receive it in the right spirit. So they pretend that they are superior to such people and laugh at them for listening to some one who is only under the influence of something which they call magic!

... وَإِذْ هُمْ نَجْوَى إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلاَّ رَجُلاً مَّسْحُورًا (٤٧)

and when they meet in private conference, Behold, the wicked say, "Ye follow none other than a man bewitched!"

انظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الأَمْثَالَ...

48. See what similes thy strike for thee;

...فَضَلُّوا فَلاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلاً (٤٨)

but they have gone astray, and never can they find a way.

C2233. Note that the word used is **"Sabilan"** "a way", not "the way".

In going astray they have lost the way; but never can they find any means of getting back to that way, or of justifying themselves or making good their wicked similes.

وَقَالُوا أَئِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا (٤٩)

49. They say:

"What! when we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new creation?"

C2234. They do not realise that Allah Who created them once out of nothing can create them again, with memories of their past, in order to render to Him an account of how they used or misused the talents and opportunities which they were given.

If it is to be a new Creation, what then?

Bones and dust or ashes may yet retain something of the personality which was enshrined in them. But even if they were reduced to stones or iron or anything which their minds can conceive of as being most unlike them, yet there is nothing impossible to Allah!

He has clearly sent a Message that we shall have to render an account of ourselves, and His Message is necessarily true. (R).

قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا (٥٠)

50. Say: "(Nay!) be ye stones or iron,

أَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ...

51. "Or created matter which, in your minds, is hardest (to be raised up) -- (yet shall ye be raised up)!"

...فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَن يُعِيدُنَا...

Then will they say: "Who will cause us to return?"

...قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ...

Say: "He Who created you first!"

...فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُؤُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هُوَ...

Then will they wag their heads towards thee, and say, "When will that be?"

C2235. The skeptic shifts his ground when he is cornered in argument. It is no longer tenable for him to say that it cannot happen or that there is no one who can bring him back to life and memory. He now gets shaky, and says, "Well, when is that going to happen?"

The actual time no man can tell. Indeed that event will be on a plane in which there will be no Time. Our relative ideas of time and place will have been completely overthrown, and it will appear to us then, not that it has been postponed too long, but that it has come too soon!

See the next verse and note.

...قُلْ عَسَى أَن يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا (٥١)

Say, "Maybe it will be quite soon!

...يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ

52. "It will be on a Day when He will call you, and ye will answer (His call) with (words of) His praise,

...وَتَظُنُّونَ ...

and ye will think

C2236. It may be that this verse should not be in the inverted commas governed by the verb "say", in the last clause of the last verse. In that case, the answer to the skeptic would be finished in the last verse, and this verse would be a general statement applying also to the righteous, who will rise up celebrating the praises of Allah.

But on the whole, I think it is better to take this verse as part of the answer to the skeptic referred to in the last verse.

... إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (٥٢)

that ye tarried but a little while!"

C2237. Whatever may have been your spiritual blindness in this life, the "new creation" will have opened your eyes to the Truth. No one will any longer be in any delusion as regards the Reality of Allah, and will be

forced, by their new circumstances, to recognise the Truth and sing Allah's praises. And all will be surprised at the seemingly short flight of time since they had their little ephemeral life on this earth. They will now appraise its true worth.

Section 6

وَقُل لِّعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ...

53. Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best:

C2238. This command refers to two situations.

- Even to your enemies and the enemies of Allah you should speak fair:

  who are you to judge others?

  Judgment belongs to Allah alone, for He knows you (i.e., all mankind) best, and your personal knowledge is at best imperfect. And Satan is always trying to divide mankind.

- Amongst yourselves, also you should not entertain suspicions, but speak politely according to the best standards of human speech. A false or unkind word may destroy all your efforts at building up unity, because the forces of disruption are more numerous than the forces of unity.

...إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنزَغُ بَيْنَهُمْ...

for Satan doth sow dissensions among them:

...إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا (٥٣)

for Satan is to man an avowed enemy.

رَّبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ...

54. It is your Lord that knoweth you best:

...إِن يَشَأْ يَرْحَمْكُمْ أَوْ إِن يَشَأْ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ...

if He please, He granteth you mercy, or if He please, punishment:

C2239. Man should never for a single moment entertain a thought that would imply that he was wiser than Allah. Allah's knowledge is all-embracing. If He grants mercy to some that you consider wicked or punishment to some that you consider righteous, it is your knowledge or your deductions that are at fault, not Allah's righteous Plan.

Even Prophets of Allah are not sent to arrange or dispose of men's affairs, but only to teach Allah's Message. How much less can ordinary men presume to judge other men?

The Mashiyat -Will and Plan of Allah- is above all human wisdom. (R).

...وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلاً (٥٤)

We have not sent thee to be a disposer of their affairs for them.

...وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ...

55. And it is your Lord that knoweth best all beings that are in the heavens and on earth:

C2240. Not only are we not to judge other ordinary men and carp at them. We are not to set up false standards for judging the Prophets of Allah.

If one was born of the unlearned Arab race, he yet was a mercy to all the worlds.

If one spoke to Allah as Kalim Allah or another's life Ruh Allah began with a miracle; it does not imply superiority. It only means that Allah's wisdom is more profound than we can fathom. (R).

...وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

We did bestow on some Prophets more (and other) gifts than on others:

...وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ زَبُورًا (٥٥)

and We gave to David (the gift of) the Psalms.

C2241. The spiritual gifts with which the prophets came may themselves take different forms, according to the needs of the world and the times in which they lived, as judged by the wisdom of Allah.

A striking example here given is the gift of David over others.

David was given the Zabur, the Psalter or Psalms, intended to be for the worship of Allah and the celebration of Allah's praise.

For the Book of Psalms, see the last part of n. 669 to 4:163, where exactly the same words are used about David.

قُلِ ادْعُواْ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِهِ...

56. Say: "Call on those -- besides Him -- whom ye fancy:

...فَلاَ يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنكُمْ وَلاَ تَحْوِيلاً (٥٦)

they have neither the power to remove your troubles from you nor to change them."

C2242. Men's suspicions of each or of the prophets have been condemned in the previous verses.

We now have the strongest condemnation of all, that of imagining any other being as being equal or in the same category with One true God. Allah has all power: they have no power. They cannot remove men's troubles. They cannot even mitigate or change them so as to afford the least relief. Why indulge in false worship?

أُولَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ...

57. Those whom they call upon do desire (for themselves) means of access to their Lord --

...أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ...

even those who are nearest: they hope for His Mercy and fear His Wrath:

C2243. Where men or heroes, or prophets or angels are worshipped, the worship is futile; because;

- even if they are good and holy, and ever so near to Allah, yet the nearest of them have need to seek means of access to Allah, and they do seek such means, viz,: the hope of Allah's Grace;

- though by their very nature it is impossible for us to suppose that they will incur the Wrath of Allah, yet they are but creatures and are subject to the law of personal responsibility.

...إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا (٥٧)

for the Wrath of thy Lord is something to take heed of.

...وَإِن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ إِلاَّ نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا

58. There is not a population but We shall destroy it before the Day of Judgment or punish it with a dreadful Penalty:

C2244. These verses are a commentary on the last clause of the last verse. "The Wrath of thy Lord is something to take heed of."

The godless thoughtlessly challenge Allah's Wrath, but do they realise its nature?

Even the best of us must be moved with terror when we think of its consequences, were it not for His unbounded Mercy.

Those who deny the Hereafter fail to realise its terrible Portents. They ask for Portents and Miracles now, but do they realise that their coming means destruction and misery to those who reject faith? They will come soon enough. The whole world will be convulsed before the Day of Judgment. The part of the wise is to prepare for it.

...كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا (٥٨)

that is written in the (eternal) Record.

...وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَن نُّرْسِلَ بِالآيَاتِ إِلاَّ أَن كَذَّبَ بِهَا الأَوَّلُونَ

59. And We refrain from sending the Signs, only because the men of former generations treated them as false:

C2245. Past generations treated Signs and Portents with contempt or rebellion, and brought about their own undoing. It is only Allah's Mercy that gives them Grace for a time and prevents the coming of those Portents and Punishments which would overwhelm them if they were put to their trial at once.

...وَآتَيْنَا ثَمُودَ النَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا...

We sent the She-camel: to the Thamud to open their eyes, but they treated her wrongfully:

C2246. An example is cited from the story of Thamud.

A wonderful She-camel was sent among them as a Portent and a Symbol. In their wickedness they hamstrung her.

So instead of her reclaiming them she was a cause of their destruction, as their sin and rebellion were laid bare. For the story of the She-camel and the references to the passages in which she is mentioned, see n. 104 4 to 7:73.

...وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالآيَاتِ إِلاَّ تَخْوِيفًا (٥٩)

We only send the Signs by way of terror (and warning from evil).

C2247. Signs, Miracles, and Portents are sent by Allah as a warning, to strike terror into the hearts of evil-doers and reclaim them to the right path.

I have discussed Fear as a motive for reclaiming certain kinds of hard hearts, in my note 82 to 2:74. But some hearts are so hard that even this motive does not work. As they have a limited free-will given by Allah, they are to that extent free to choose. But when they actually choose evil, Allah in His infinite Mercy delays their punishment and removes the occasion for their immediate self-destruction by withholding the Signs which might make them transgress all the more and compass their total destruction.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ...

60. Behold! We told thee that thy Lord doth encompass mankind round about:

C2248. The reference may be to 72:28, probably an earlier Makkan revelation. But the argument is independent of time.

This verse falls naturally into three divisions. Warnings and Portents and Signs are sent or not sent according to Allah's All-Wise Plan of Mercy and Justice, this is in no wise inconsistent with the apparent freedom given to the wicked: because:

- in any case Allah is all round all His creatures, and His delay as a Sign of Mercy in no way diminishes His power;
- the Visions of Truth vouchsafed to Prophets of Allah are themselves Signs by which they can warn the ungodly; and
- sometimes it is more merciful to give them time by not immediately bringing the matter to judgment. (R).

...وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّؤيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلاَّ فِتْنَةً لِّلنَّاسِ...

We granted the Vision which We showed thee, but as a trial for men --

C2249. Some Commentators take this as referring to the Mi'raj (17:1) and others to other visions. Such visions are miracles, and become a stumbling block to unbelievers.

They are an encouragement to men of faith. Thus they are "a trial for men".

...وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ...

as also the Cursed Tree (mentioned) in the Qur'án:

C2250. The tree Zaqqum, a bitter and pungent tree described as growing at the bottom of Hell, a type of all that is disagreeable.

See 37:62-65; 44:43-46; and 56:52.

All these are Surahs chronologically earlier than this Surah.

The application of the name to a tree of the myrobalan kind in the region of Jericho is, I think, of post-Quranic date.

It is a trial for wrong- doers. See 37:63 and n. 4073.

وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلاَّ طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا (٦٠)...

We put terror (and warning) into them, but it only increases their inordinate transgression!

C.131 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:61-84)

Arrogance, jealousy, spite and hatred
Were the cause of the fall of Iblis. Man
Was given pre-eminence above
Much of Allah's Creation, and owes
Higher responsibilities. He should give thanks
For Allah's mercies, and remember
To Day of Account. Not all the scheming
Of Evil will deflect Allah's righteous Plan
To protect His chosen ones. They should pray
Without ceasing, and seek His true Guidance;
For Truth will last, but Falsehood will perish.

Section 7

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلآئِكَةِ اسْجُدُواْ لآدَمَ ...

61. Behold! We said to the angels: "Bow down unto Adam":

C2251. Cf. 7:11-18, which deals, as is the case here, with the temptation of the individual human soul, while 2:30-38 deals with the collective race of man through Adam. Arrogance, jealousy, spite, and hatred are the ingredients in the story of Iblis.

... فَسَجَدُوا إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ...

they bowed down except Iblis:

...قَالَ أَأَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِينًا (٦١)

he said, "Shall I bow down to one whom Thou didst create from clay?"

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَـذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ...

62. He said,

"Seest Thou? This is the one whom thou hast honored above me!

...لَئِنْ أَخَّرْتَنِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لأَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (٦٢)

If Thou wilt but respite me to the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway -- all but a few!"

C2252. The power of Evil (Satan) over man is due to man's limited free-will.

In other words man hands himself to Evil. As to those who loyally worship and serve Allah, Evil has no power over them.

This is expressly mentioned in verse 65 below, and in other places.

قَالَ اذْهَبْ ...

63. Allah said: "Go thy way;

C2253. The power of Evil is summarily dismissed, but not without a clear warning.

"Do thy worst; if any of them misuse their limited free-will and deliberately follow thee, they must take the consequences with thee; all of you must answer according to your personal responsibility."

... فَمَن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَآؤُكُمْ جَزَاء مَّوْفُورًا (٦٣)

if any of them follow thee, verily Hell will be the recompense of you (all) -- an ample recompense.

وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ ...

64. "Lead to destruction those whom thou canst among them,

C2254. "Do thy worst; but ye are both warned that that path leads to destruction."

...بِصَوْتِكَ...

with thy (seductive) voice;

C2255. Evil has many snares for mankind. The one that is put in the foreground is the voice,

- the seductive personal appeal, that "makes the worse appear the better part".

...وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِم بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ...

make assaults on them with thy cavalry and thy infantry;

C2256. The forcible assault of Evil is next mentioned under the metaphor of **cavalry and infantry.**

It is when cajolery and tempting fair-seeming seem to fail that an attack is made in force with weapons of violence, of all kinds, like the different arms in an organized army.

...وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِي الأَمْوَالِ وَالأَوْلادِ وَعِدْهُمْ...

mutually share with them wealth and children; and make promises to them.

C2257. If the first assaults are resisted. Evil has other weapons in its armoury.

- Tangible fruits are dangled before the eyes, ill-gotten gains and children of sin, that follow from certain very alluring methods of indulgence in passions.
- Or it may be children dedicated to sin or worldly gains, etc. And then there are all kinds of promises for the future.

...وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلاَّ غُرُورًا (٦٤)

But Satan promises them nothing but deceit.

C2258. This is a parenthetical clause inserted to show up what the promises of the Satan are worth.

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ...

65. "As for My servants, no authority shalt thou have over them."

C2259. This verse should be read along with the two preceding ones to complete their meaning. Evil has no power except over those who yield to its solicitations.

...وَكَفَى بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلاً (٦٥)

Enough is thy Lord for a Disposer of affairs.

C2260. As Evil has no authority over the sincere servants of Allah, they should put their trust completely in Him. For He is All-Sufficient to carry out their affairs, and by His grace, to save them from all harm and danger.

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُواْ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

66. Your Lord is He that maketh the Ship go smoothly for you through the sea, in order that ye may seek of His Bounty:

C2261. This illustration of the sea, and the skill with which, by Allah's grace, men pass through it with ease in order to earn material gains by commerce, social gains by human intercourse, and spiritual gains by knowledge, is frequently used to enforce Allah's goodness to man.

Cf. 2:164.

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا (٦٦)

for He is unto you Most Merciful.

وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الْضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَن تَدْعُونَ إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ...

67. When distress seizes you at sea, those that ye call upon -- besides Himself -- leave you in the lurch!

...فَلَمَّا نَجَّاكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ...

But when He brings you back safe to land, ye turn away (from Him).

...وَكَانَ الإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا (٦٧)

Most ungrateful is man!

C2262. Against Allah's gracious gifts and mercies is contrasted man's ingratitude.

In danger he remembers Allah, the One True God, but relapses into his own fancies when the danger is past.

Cf. also 10:22-23. (R).

أَفَأَمِنتُمْ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا...

68. Do ye then feel secure that He will not cause you to be swallowed up beneath the earth when ye are on land, or that He will not send against you a violent tornado (with showers of stones)

C2263. Man is safe neither on land nor at sea except by the grace and mercy of Allah.

How forcibly this is brought home to us by the Quetta earthquake of 31st May 1935, when tens of thousands of men, women, and children, perished in a few moments, by night, buried in debris!

The stories of violent destructive tornadoes in such areas as the southern United States are equally impressive.

The destruction is so sudden that the victims have no time to arrange anything. They are simply wiped out.

...ثُمَّ لاَ تَجِدُواْ لَكُمْ وَكِيلاً (٦٨)

so that ye shall find no one to carry out your affairs for you?

أَمْ أَمِنتُمْ أَن يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى...

69. Or do ye feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea

...فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفا مِّنَ الرِّيحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُم بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ...

and send against you a heavy gale to drown you because of your ingratitude,

C2264. If a man flees from the Wrath of Allah, there is no place secure for him.

He may flee from sea to land, and back again from land to sea. But his life depends on the Disposer of all affairs.

He may go again and again to sea, and perhaps finally end by being drowned.

...ثُمَّ لاَ تَجِدُواْ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا (٦٩)

so that ye find no helper therein against Us?

...وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ

70. We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea;

... وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ...

given them for sustenance things good and pure;

...وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلاً (٧٠)

and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of Our Creation.

C2265. The distinction and honour conferred by Allah on man are recounted in order to enforce the corresponding duties and responsibilities of man.

- He is raised to a position of honour above the brute creation:
- he has been granted talents by which he can transport himself from place to place by land, sea, and now by air:
- all the means for the sustenance and growth of every part of his nature are provided by Allah;
- and his spiritual faculties (the greatest gift of Allah) raise him above the greater part of Allah's Creation.

Should he not then realise his noble destiny and prepare for his real life in the Hereafter?

Section 8

...يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ

71. One day We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) Imams:

C2266. 1 have discussed the various meanings of **Imam** in 2:124, n. 124.

What is the meaning here?

The Commentators are divided.

- Some understand the meaning to be that each People or Group will appear with its Leader, who will bear witness to its virtues or sins: Cf. 16:84.
- Another view is that the Imam is their revelation, their Book.
- A third is that the Imam is the record of deeds spoken of in the next clause.

I prefer the first.

...فَمَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُوْلَـئِكَ يَقْرَؤُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ...

those who are given their record in their right hand will read it (with pleasure),

...وَلاَ يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلاً (٧١)

and they will not be dealt with unjustly in the least.

C2267. Literally, by the value of a **fatil**, a small skin in the cleft of a date-stone: this has no value.

...وَمَن كَانَ فِي هَـذِهِ أَعْمَى فَهُوَ فِي الآخِرَةِ أَعْمَى...

72. But those who were blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter,

C2268. On the Judgment Day the children of light will receive and peruse their record, and will render joyful thanks to Allah for His Mercies.

What of the children of darkness?

They had already been blind in this world's life, and they will not receive the light of Allah's Countenance then. On the contrary they will find that the longer the time they have travelled, the farther away they have gone from the Path.

Notice the association of ideas-blindness, not seeing the light, going farther and farther away from the true Path.

...وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلاً (٧٢)

and most astray from the Path.

...وَإِن كَادُواْ لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ

73. And their purpose was to tempt thee away from that which We had revealed unto thee, to substitute in Our name something quite different: (in that case),

C2269. It happens with men of Allah, and it happened with the holy Prophet, that they are tempted by the world with many things which appeal to the world generally, if they would make some small concession in their favour. The "small concession" may hold the key of the position, and neutralize the whole teaching sent by Allah.

If the Prophet had accepted wealth and position among the Quraish and "only respected" their idols! The Quraish would have taken him into their inner circle!

A dishonest liar like Musaylama would have jumped at the opportunity and been hailed as a friend and associate and made much 0f. But Prophets of Allah are made of sterner stuff. They are given special strength to resist all plausible deception. (R).

...وَإِذًا لاَّتَّخَذُوكَ خَلِيلاً (٧٣)

behold! they would certainly have made thee (their) friend!

وَلَوْلاَ أَن ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدتَّ تَرْكَنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلاً (٧٤)

74. And had We not given thee strength, thou wouldst nearly have inclined to them a little.

C2270. From a purely human point of view it may seem policy to make a small "concession" to men's weakness in order to fulfil a divine mission. But the divine Messenger is given special strength to resist such temptations.

...إِذاً لَّأَذَقْنَاكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ

75. In that case We should have made thee taste an equal portion (of punishment) in this life, and an equal portion in death:

C2271. If such a thing was possible for a true Messenger of Allah, viz.:

a compromise with evil and a dereliction of his mission, he would be no exception to the law of personal responsibility.

Indeed, as the power and the responsibility were greater, the punishment would have been greater too. It would have been double,

- an exposure in this life and the usual punishment in or after death for a desertion of Truth.

...ثُمَّ لاَ تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا (٧٥)

and moreover thou wouldst have found none to help thee against Us!

C2272. The motive held out by the world for a compromise with Truth is itself fallacious. The motive is that the compromise may bring influence, position, and opportunity, if not wealth and the other good things of life. But these themselves (if attained) would be of no use or help if pitted against the command of Allah.

...وَإِن كَادُواْ لَيَسْتَفِزُّونَكَ مِنَ الأَرْضِ لِيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا

76. Their purpose was to scare thee off the land, in order to expel thee;

C2273. As happened in the case of the holy Prophet, the enemies try to frighten the Prophet of Allah away from their midst, so that, once away, they could expel him and keep him out. But they are counting without the Plan of Allah. If they persecute the righteous, they dig their own graves! (R).

...وَإِذًا لاَّ يَلْبَثُونَ خِلاَفَكَ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (٧٦)

but in that case they would not have stayed (therein) after thee, except for a little while.

...سُنَّةَ مَن قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِن رُّسُلِنَا

77. (This was Our) way with the Messengers We sent before thee:

...وَلاَ تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلاً (٧٧)

thou wilt find no change in Our ways.

C2274. This was no new thing in history. Allah protects His own, and the ungodly cannot long enjoy the fruits of their unrighteousness even if their punishment be delayed a little while.

Section 9

أَقِمِ الصَّلاَةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ...

78. Establish regular prayers -- at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading:

C2275. The Commentators understand here the command for the five daily canonical prayers, viz,:

the four from the declination of the sun from the zenith to the fullest darkness of the night, and the early morning prayer, Fajr, which is usually accompanied by a reading of the holy Quran.

The four afternoon prayers are:

- Zuhr, immediately after the sun begins to decline in the afternoon;
- 'Asr, in the late afternoon;
- Magrib, immediately after sunset; and
- Isha, after the glow of sunset has disappeared and the full darkness of the night has set in.

There is difference of opinion as to the meaning of particular words and phrases, but none as to the general effect of the passage.

...إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا (٧٨)

for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.

C2276. The morning prayer is specially singled out for separate mention, because the morning is a "peaceful hour" and special influences act on the soul awaking

from the night's rest. Special testimony is borne to the prayers of this hour by the angelic host.

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ ...

79. And pray in the small watches of the morning: (it would be) an additional prayer (or spiritual profit) for thee:

C2277. This is held to be addressed specially to the holy Prophet who usually prayed more than the five canonical prayers.

The Tahajjud was a prayer after midnight, in the small watches of the morning.

... عَسَى أن يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا (٧٩)

soon will thy Lord raise thee to a station of Praise and Glory!

C2278. To the Prophet was to be assigned in the Hereafter the highest Post of Honour and Glory - the **Maqam Mahmud**, implying his excellence above all other Prophets.

The immediate reference may be to the hope that the Makkan persecution will soon be over and the glorious work in Madinah will begin. (R).

وَقُل رَّبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ...

80. Say: "O my Lord! let my entry be by the Gate of Truth and Honor, and likewise my exit by the Gate of Truth and Honor;

C2279. The entry and exit here referred to may be interpreted in four senses:

1. entry into death and exit at the resurrection:

   for the righteous, who have purified their souls by prayer (last verse) and spiritual teaching from the Quran (next verse), there is on each occasion a fuller and fuller realisation and enjoyment of truth and honour: for those who are estranged from Allah, the effect is the opposite: the truth becomes bitter and there is ignominy and exposure instead of honour:

2. entry for the holy Prophet into the new life at Madinah, which was still in the womb of futurity, and

exit from the life of persecution and the milieu of falsehood, which surrounded him in his native city of Makkah still given up to idolatry:

3. referring to the impending Hijrah again, the prayer may mean,

   "Let it be from pure motives of truth and spiritual honour, and not from motives of anger against the city of Makkah or its persecutors, or of ambition or worldly power from the city of Madinah, which was ready to lay everything at the Prophet's feet":

4. generally, entry and exit at every stage of life.

...وَاجْعَل لِّي مِن لَّدُنكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيرًا (٨٠)

and grant me from Thy Presence an authority to aid (me)."

C2280. All prayer must be for Allah's aid and authority. However much we may plan, our success must depend on His aid. However nobler our motives, we have no right to imperil any lives unless there is authority in the Word of Allah. The Prophet only acts on Allah's commission and inspiration,

...وَقُلْ جَاء الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ

81. And say: "Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished:

...إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا (٨١)

for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish."

C2281. From its nature falsehood must perish, for it is the opposite of Truth, and Truth must ever prevail.

...وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاء وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

82. We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur'án that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe:

...وَلاَ يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلاَّ خَسَارًا (٨٢)

to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.

C2282. In Allah's revelation there is healing for our broken spirits, hope for our spiritual future, and joy in

the forgiveness of our sins. All who work in faith will share in these privileges.

It is only the rebels against Allah's Law who will suffer loss. The more they will oppose Truth, the deeper down will they go into the mire-the state of sin and Wrath, which is worse than destruction.

وَإِذَآ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الإِنسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَى بِجَانِبِهِ...

83. Yet when We bestow Our favors on man, he turns away and becomes remote on his side (instead of coming to Us),

...وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَؤُوسًا (٨٣)

and when Evil seizes him he gives himself up to despair!

C2283. Truth saves us from two extremes:

- when we are happy, we are saved from being puffed up, for we realise that everything comes from Allah;
- and when we suffer misfortunes, we are not in despair, for we know that Allah is our sure refuge and help.

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ...

84. Say: "Everyone acts according to his own disposition:

...فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَى سَبِيلاً (٨٤)

but your Lord knows best who it is that is best guided on the Way."

C2284. If the wicked go their own ways, there is nothing to discourage us. It is their nature. We must seek and hold fast to true guidance.

C.132 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(17:85-111)

Who can define the Spirit of Inspiration?
Its gift is the highest of Allah's Mercies
To man. The Quran is divine, and no carping

Can affect its greatness or the greatness
Of the Messenger who brought it to men,
Those who reject it will be called
To account on the Day of Judgement. Let not
Pride and Ignorance rush, like Pharaoh,
To the Punishment of the Hereafter.
The Quran as revealed by stages teaches
The Truth; learn it and chant it, and praise
The Beautiful Names of Allah forever!

Section 10

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ...

85. They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration).

C2285. What is the nature of inspiration?

Who brings it?

Can it ask its Bringer questions?

Can we ask anything which we wish?

These are the sort of questions always asked when inspiration is called in question. The answer is given here,.

Inspiration is one of those high experiences which cannot be explained in the terms of our everyday human experience. It is spiritual.

The Spirit (Gabriel) does not come of his own will. He comes by the command of Allah, and reveals what Allah commands him to reveal.

Of the sum-total of true divine knowledge what a small part it is that ordinary mortals can understand! They can be only given that which they can understand, however dimly. We are not in a position to ask anything that we wish. If we did so, it would only make us look foolish, for the guidance comes from Allah's Wisdom, not from our worldly knowledge.

...قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُم مِّن الْعِلْمِ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً (٨٥)

Say:

"The Spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord:

of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!)

...وَلَئِن شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ

86. If it were Our Will, We could take away that which We have sent thee by inspiration:

C2286. Even the spiritual knowledge that comes to us comes because of the favour and mercy of Allah. If He were to withhold it, who can call Him in question?

...ثُمَّ لاَ تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهِ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيلاً (٨٦)

then would thou find none to plead thy affair in that matter as against Us --

...إِلاَّ رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ

87. Except for Mercy from thy Lord:

C2287. In that case the only one who can plead for us is the Mercy of Allah.

We can interpret the phrase in its widest abstract sense, as well as in the concrete sense of the title which is applied to the holy Prophet Muhammad, the Mercy of Allah. Thus we come from the abstract question to the concrete question of the Quran, which is referred to by name in the verses that follow.

...إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيرًا (٨٧)

for His Bounty is to thee (indeed) great.

...قُل لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَن يَأْتُواْ بِمِثْلِ هَـذَا الْقُرْآنِ

88. Say:

"If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'án,

C2288. For the meaning of "Jinns", see n. 929 to 6:100.

...لاَ يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا (٨٨)

they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.

C2289. The proof of the Quran is in its own beauty and nature, and the circumstances in which it was promulgated. The world is challenged to produce a Book like it and has not produced one.

It is the only revealed Book whose text stands pure and uncorrupted today.

Cf., for a similar challenge, 2:23, 10:38, and 11:13.

...وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَـذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ

89. And We have explained to man, in this Qur'án, every kind of similitude:

C2290. In the Quran everything is explained in detail from various points of view, by commands, similitudes, examples, stories, parables, etc.

It does not merely narrate stories or lay down vague abstract propositions. It gives every detailed help in outward and inner life.

...فَأَبَى أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلاَّ كُفُورًا (٨٩)

yet the greater part of men refuse (to receive it) except with ingratitude!

C2291. One form in which it can be received with ingratitude is to pay verbal tributes to it but not study it as it ought to be studied (2:121 , haqqa tilawatihi), or to disobey its precepts or standards.

وَقَالُواْ لَن نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الأَرْضِ يَنبُوعًا (٩٠)

90. They say:

"We shall not believe in thee, until thou cause spring to gush forth for us from the earth,

C2292. Cf. 2:60.

أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّخِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجِّرَ الأَنْهَارَ خِلاَلَهَا تَفْجِيرًا (٩١)

91. "Or (until) thou have a garden of date trees and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water;

C2293. This ill-assorted and crude jumble of the sort of miracles which the Unbelievers wanted is in very appropriate contrast to the sober and reasoned argument which has begun in the last sentence of verse 93 and continued in sections 11 and 12, which close this Surah.

It is throughout reminiscent of the materialistic imagination of Jewish skeptics, which was mainly responsible for the fall of the Jewish nation (see verse 104 below). For a thirsty people sojourning in a dry land, the finding of a spring of water as in the story of Moses or of the well of Zamzam is an appropriate miracle. But miracles are not for faithless crowds to gape at.

A beautiful well-watered Garden is a symbol of Felicity: but a skeptic cannot order Allah to produce it for his pleasure. The same may be said about a house adorned with gold, except that its symbolism is even more materialistic.

The fall of the sky or producing Allah face to face or climbing to the skies by a ladder, or bringing down a book of parchment which men could handle, are all irreverent suggestions that make no distinction between spiritual and material things.

أَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَاء كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا...

92. "Or thou cause the sky to fall in pieces, as thou sayest (will happen), against us;

C2294. Contrast the sublime passages like the beginning with 82:1. or that in 25:25, where the final breaking up of the firmaments as we know them is referred to in the world's catastrophe, with the ridiculous demand that it should be done for the sport of the skeptics!

...أَوْ تَأْتِيَ بِاللّهِ وَالْمَلآئِكَةِ قَبِيلاً (٩٢)

or thou bring Allah and the angels before (us) face to face;

C2295. Cf. 2:55 and 4:153 about the desire of the Israelites to see Allah face to face;

and 6:8-9, about angels coming down to convince men.

أَوْ يَكُونَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّن زُخْرُفٍ أَوْ تَرْقَى فِي السَّمَاءِ...

93. "Or thou have a house adorned with gold, or thou mount a ladder right into the skies.

C2296. Cf. 6:35 about a ladder to the skies.

...وَلَن نُّؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتَّى تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نَّقْرَؤُهُ...

No, we shall not even believe in thy mounting until thou send down to us a book that we could read."

C2297. Cf. 6:7 for the foolish idea of materialistic skeptics that a spiritual revelation could come down from the heavens on a piece of parchment that they can touch.

...قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي هَلْ كُنتُ إِلاَّ بَشَرًا رَّسُولاً (٩٣)

Say: "Glory to my Lord! am I aught but a man -- a Messenger?"

C2298. A prophet or messenger of Allah is a man at the command of Allah, and not to satisfy the disingenuous whims and fancies of Unbelievers.

Miracles greater than any that their foolish fancies could devise were before them. The Quran was such a miracle, and it is a standing miracle that lasts through the ages.

Why did they not believe?

The real reason was spite and jealousy like that of Iblis. See next verse.

Section 11

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ إِذْ جَاءهُمُ الْهُدَى...

94. What kept men back from Belief when Guidance came to them, was nothing but this:

...إِلاَّ أَن قَالُواْ أَبَعَثَ اللّهُ بَشَرًا رَّسُولاً (٩٤)

they said, "Has Allah sent a man like (us) to be (His) Messenger?"

C2299. When a man is raised to honour and dignity, his sincere brothers rejoice, for it is an honour that reflects its glory on them. But those with evil in their hearts are jealous like their prototype Iblis, (17:61, n. 2251).

To such men the mere fact that their own brother receives the grace of Allah is enough to turn them against that brother.

Any other reasons they may devise are mere make-believe.

...قُل لَّوْ كَانَ فِي الأَرْضِ مَلآئِكَةٌ يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ

95. Say,

"If there were settled, on earth, angels walking about in peace and quiet,

C2300. The argument is that if angels inhabited this earth, an angel from heaven could be sent down as a messenger to them, as they could mutually understand each other, and the Message of Allah could be explained without difficulty.

But the earth is inhabited by men, and the men themselves are divided into races, or groups, or nations. To each Group is sent a prophet from among their brethren: to 'Ad, their brother Hud (11:50); to Thamud, their brother Salih (11:61): and so on.

As a matter of fact, with wicked men, constituted as they are, the appearance of an angel causes disturbance and an unseemly riot, as in the case of the angels that came to Lut (11:77-80).

In any case they cannot carry out an effective mission among men (6:8-9).

...لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاء مَلَكًا رَّسُولاً (٩٥)

We should certainly have sent them down from the heavens an angel for a messenger."

قُلْ كَفَى بِاللّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ...

96. Say: "Enough is Allah for a witness between me and you:

C2301. 'If you want a real witness, it is not these sorts of fancy miracles, but the witness of the true ever-living God. Purify your hearts, and ask Him in true contrition and repentance, and He will guide you and show you the Way'. (R).

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا (٩٦)

for He is well-acquainted with His servants, and He sees (all things)."

وَمَن يَهْدِ اللّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ...

97. It is he whom Allah guides, that is on true guidance;

...وَمَن يُضْلِلْ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُمْ أَوْلِيَاء مِن دُونِهِ...

but he whom He leaves astray -- for such wilt thou find no protector besides Him.

C2302. 'All your insincere subtleties are of no use. The only real guidance is the guidance of Allah. If you do not seek His grace, you will be lost. Besides Him, there is no true friend or protector'.

...وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمْيًا وَبُكْمًا وَصُمًّا...

On the Day of Judgment We shall gather them together, prone on their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf:

...مَّأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا (٩٧)

their abode will be Hell:

every time it shows abatement, We shall increase for them the fierceness of the Fire.

C2303. 'If you still persist in your evil ways, what is to be your evil end?

You will become more and more identified with the Company of Evil. You will come to shame and ignominy, like men thrown down prone on their faces. You will lose the use of all the faculties of judgment with which Allah has endowed you.

Instead of seeing, you will be blind to Allah's Signs. Instead of having the power of seeking Him in prayer and rejoicing in His grace, you will be dumb. Instead of hearing the harmony and music of the spheres, as typified in the pure and harmonious lives of men, you will hear nothing or only hear dull or confused sounds like deaf men.

The scorching fire of your punishment will not grow less, but grow more fierce as you go deeper into Hell'.

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُم بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا...

98. That is their recompense, because they rejected Our Signs,

...وَقَالُواْ أَئِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا (٩٨)

and said, "When we are reduced to bones and broken dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new Creation?"

C2304. This phrase is repeated from 17:49.

The reminiscence rounds off the argument. After certain moral precepts to which Faith was linked, we have had a discussion of Unfaith. Its various motives have been analyzed, and its penalties have been allegorically shadowed forth.

After this, the example of Pharaoh is held as a type of Unfaith in the next section, and the Surah closed with an exhortation to faith and a declaration of the glory of Allah.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْاْ أَنَّ اللّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَن

يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ...

99. See they not that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, has power to create the like of them (anew)?

C2305. Allah, Who created all that is in the heavens and on earth, has surely the power to revive the life of individual souls after their bodies have perished, -and revive them with memories of their past life and for a continuation of their spiritual history. Only He has fixed a term for each stage of our existence, which we can neither prolong nor shorten.

...وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ أَجَلاً لاَّ رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

Only He has decreed a term appointed, of which there is no doubt.

...فَأَبَى الظَّالِمُونَ إِلاَّ كُفُورًا (٩٩)

But the unjust refuse (to receive it) except with ingratitude.

C2306. This phrase carries us back to 17:89, after we began the argument about the real motives for the rejection of the Quran by skeptics.

The argument is now closed in a sort of minor circle within the major circle sketched in n. 2304 above.

قُل لَّوْ أَنتُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَآئِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي...

100. Say: "If ye had control of the Treasures of the Mercy of my Lord,

...إِذًا لَّأَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الإِنفَاقِ...

behold, ye would keep them back, for fear of spending them:

...وَكَانَ الإِنسَانُ قَتُورًا (١٠٠)

for man is (ever) niggardly!"

C2307. A fresh argument is now addressed to those who would confine Allah's revelations to a limited circle of men, such as they themselves belonged to.

The immediate reference was to the Jews, who could not understand how any Gentiles could receive revelations and guidance even superior to what they considered their own birth-right. But the tendency is widespread in the human race.

A particular race, or caste, or a particular kind of culture, claims to be the custodian of Allah's Message, whereas it is universal. Allah's Mercy is universal, and He scatters the priceless Treasures of His Mercy broadcast among His creatures. They are not exhausted by spending. It is only the misers who hoard their wealth for fear it should be used up by spending.

'Are you spiritual misers going to keep back Allah's holy Message from the multitude?

Is that the reason why you deny the advent of the new Teacher, who comes as a Mercy to all men-to all Creation?'

Section 12

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ...

101. To Moses We did give nine Clear Signs:

C2308. Nine Clear Signs: see 7:133, n. 1091.

The story of Pharaoh (or a phase of it) is here told with a view to exhibiting the decline of a soul on account of pride in outward power and dignity.

...فَاسْأَلْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِذْ جَاءهُمْ فَقَالَ لَهُ فِرْعَونُ...

ask the Children of Israel: when he came to them, Pharaoh said to him:

C2309. To them: i.e., to Pharaoh, as sitting in his Council, with the Chiefs of his people. Cf. 7:103.

The whole scene is described in some detail from the point of view of nations or Ummahs in 7:103-133.

...إِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يَا مُوسَى مَسْحُورًا (١٠١)

"O Moses! I consider thee, indeed, to have been worked upon by sorcery!"

C2310. At a different and later stage in the scene, Pharaoh's Chiefs call Moses a "sorcerer well-versed" (7:109).

Here Moses, who had come with the Nine Signs but had not yet shown them, is reproached with being the object of sorcery: he is practically told that he is mad!

قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا أَنزَلَ هَـؤُلاء إِلاَّ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ

بَصَآئِرَ...

102. Moses said, "Thou knowest well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening evidence:

C2311. We can well suppose Moses to ask Pharaoh to recall all the past history of Moses, for Moses had been brought up in Pharaoh's palace in all the learning of the Egyptians. He could not therefore be mad, or a simpleton worked on by Egyptian magic.

What he was going to show was something far greater; it was not the deceptive magic of Pharaoh's sorcerers, but true Signs that came from Allah, the Lord of all power. They were to open the eyes of his people, and if Pharaoh resisted faith. Moses warns him that Pharaoh in that case was doomed to destruction.

This is the course of the soul that sinks down by Pride! (R).

...وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يَا فِرْعَونُ مَثْبُورًا (١٠٢)

and I consider thee, indeed, O Pharaoh, to be one doomed to destruction!"

...فَأَرَادَ أَن يَسْتَفِزَّهُم مِّنَ الأَرْضِ

103. So he resolved to remove them from the face of the earth:

C2312. Pharaoh on this tries various subterfuges and plans for removing not only Moses but all his people by doing away with them.

The detailed story is not told here but may be read in Surah 7.

But Allah's Wrath descended on Pharaoh and those who were with him in body and mind. The Egyptians who repented were subject to Pharaoh's wrath but were saved from the Wrath of Allah (7:121-126).

...فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُ وَمَن مَّعَهُ جَمِيعًا (١٠٣)

but We did drown him and all who were with him.

...وَقُلْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِ لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اسْكُنُوا الأَرْضَ

104. And We said thereafter to the Children of Israel, "Dwell securely in the land (of promise)":

C2313. The Israelites were taken to the Promised Land in Palestine, and they established their own kingdom there, but they forfeited Allah's favour by their sins and backslidings and will have to answer like all souls by the law of personal responsibility at the Day of Judgment.

...فَإِذَا جَاء وَعْدُ الآخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيفًا (١٠٤)

but when the second of the warnings came to pass, We gathered you together in a mingled crowd.

C2314. The second of the warnings:

- the first was probably that mentioned above, in 17:5 and
- the second that mentioned in 17:7 (middle).

When this second warning due to the rejection of Jesus came to pass, the Jews were gathered together in a mingled crowd.

Some Commentators understand the second warning to be the Day of Judgment, the Promise of the Hereafter. (R).

...وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنزَلْنَاهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ

105. We sent down the (Qur'án) in Truth, and in Truth has it descended:

C2315. The Quran was sent down by Allah in Truth: it was not forged by any mortal.

It has descended in Truth: it was not and has not been falsified or corrupted in the process of being communicated to mankind.

...وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلاَّ مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (١٠٥)

and We sent thee but to give Glad Tidings and to warn (sinners).

C2316. The part of the Prophet was that of a Messenger: he was not responsible if the ungodly rejected it. He fulfilled his mission in promulgating and explaining it and leaving it as a legacy to the world.

وَقُرْآناً فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ...

106. (It is) a Qur'án which We have divided (into parts from time to time), in order that thou mightest recite it to men at intervals:

...وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنزِيلاً (١٠٦)

We have revealed it by stages.

C2317. The marvel is that these parts, revealed at different times and in different circumstances, should fit together so closely and consistently as they do. All revelation is progressive.

The previous revelations were also progressive. Each of them marked a stage in the world's spiritual history.

Man's mind does not take in more than his spiritual state will have prepared him, for Allah's revelation comes as a light to illuminate our difficulties and show us the way in actual situations that arise.

قُلْ آمِنُواْ بِهِ أَوْ لاَ تُؤْمِنُواْ...

107. Say: "Whether ye believe in it or not,

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ الْعِلْمَ مِن قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ لِلأذْقَانِ

سُجَّدًا (١٠٧)

it is true that those who were given knowledge beforehand, when it is recited to them, fall down on their faces in humble prostration,"

C2318. No one's belief or unbelief affects the beauty or grandeur of Allah's revelation. But those endowed with spiritual knowledge or insight know at once when they hear Allah's holy Word, and fall down and adore Allah.

Those endowed with knowledge include those who had received previous revelations and had kept themselves free from corrupt ideas.

وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِن كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولاً (١٠٨)

108. And say: "Glory to our Lord! truly has the promise of our Lord been fulfilled!"

C2319. Those who had received previous revelations find in the Quran and in the Messenger who brought it, the promise of Allah fulfilled. Those who were spiritually prepared for it found in the same way the satisfaction of their spiritual yearnings: to them, also, Allah's promise was sent to be fulfilled.

وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلأَذْقَانِ يَبْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا (١٠٩)

109. They fall down on their faces in tears, and it increases their (earnest) humility.

C2320. A feeling of earnest humility comes to the man who realises how, in spite of his own unworthiness, he is brought, by Allah's Mercy, into touch with the most sublime Truths.

Such a man is touched with the deepest emotion, which finds its outlet in tears.

قُلِ ادْعُواْ اللّهَ أوِ ادْعُواْ الرَّحْمَـنَ...

110. Say: "Call upon Allah, or call upon Rahman:

C2321. Cf. 7:180.

Rahman describes one of the attributes of Allah, -His grace and Mercy which come to the sinner even before he feels conscious of the need of it,- the preventive Grace which saves Allah's servants from sin. See n. 19 to 1:1.

Allah can be invoked, either by His simple name, which includes all attributes, or by one of the names implying the attributes by which we try to explain His nature to our limited understanding. The attribute of Mercy in Rahman was particularly repugnant to the Pagan Arabs (see 25:60, and 21:36): that is why special stress is laid on it in the Quran. (R).

...أَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُواْ فَلَهُ الأَسْمَاء الْحُسْنَى ...

by whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

C2322. These Beautiful Names of Allah are many. The Hadith related by Tirmizi, accepted by some as authentic, mentions 99 names of Allah.

Qadhi Muhammad Sulaiman has published an Urdu monograph on the subject, published by the Daftar Rahmatun-lil-'Alamin Patiala, 1930. Those who wish to see a poetic Commentary on the names in the form of stories in English may consult Sir Edwin Arnold's Pearls of the Faith.

Sir Edwin's stories are of unequal merit, but a fine example is furnished by No. 4, al-Malik. "The King". (R).

...وَلاَ تَجْهَرْ بِصَلاَتِكَ وَلاَ تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلاً (١١٠)

Neither speak thy Prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a middle course between."

C2323. Cf. 7:205.

All prayer should be pronounced with earnestness and humility, whether it is congregational prayer or the private outpouring of one's own soul.

Such an attitude is not consistent with an over-loud pronunciation of the words, though in public prayers the standard of permissible loudness is naturally higher than in the case of private prayer.

In public prayers, of course, the Azan or call to prayer will be in a loud voice to be heard near and far, but the chants from the Sacred Book should be neither so loud as to attract the hostile notice of those who do not believe not so low in tone as not to be heard by the whole congregation.

...وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا

111. Say:

"Praise be to Allah Who begets no son,

...وَلَم يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ وَلِيٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ

and has no partner in (His) dominion: nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation:

C2324. A first step towards the understanding of Allah's attributes is to clear our mind from superstitions, such as that Allah begot a son, or that He has partners, or that He is dependent upon other beings to protect Him from harm and humiliation.

We must realise that He is the One and Peerless. His greatness and glory are above anything we can conceive: but using our highest spiritual ideas, we must declare forth His greatness and glory.

The Surah began with singing the glory and praises of Allah: it ends on the same note, concluding the argument.

The next Surah takes up the same theme from another point of view, and opens with the same note, "Praise be to Allah". (R).

وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيرًا (١١١)...

Yea, magnify Him for His greatness and glory!"

إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا

Certainly! We shall not suffer to be lost the reward of anyone who does his (righteous) deeds in the most perfect manner.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Kahf

الكَهْفِ

Introduction and Summary

It has been explained in the introduction to Surah 17 how the five Surahs 17 to 21 develop the theme of the individual soul's spiritual history, and how they fit into general scheme of exposition.

This particular Makkan Surah may be called a lesson in the brevity and mystery of Life.

- First there is the story of the Companions of the Cave who slept therein for a long period, and yet thought they had been only a day or less.

- Then there is the story of the mysterious Teacher who shows Moses how Life itself is a parable.
- And further there is the story of Dhu al Qarnayn, the two-horned one, the powerful ruler of west and east, who made an iron wall to protect the weak against the strong.

The parable refer to the brevity, uncertainty, and vanity of this life; to the many paradoxes in it, which can only be understood by patience and the fullness of knowledge; and to the need of guarding our spiritual gains against the incursions of evil.

Summary- The Quran is a direction and a warning. This life is brief and subject to vicissitudes. Our ideas of Time are defective, as shown in the story of Companions of Cave, who had faith, truth, patience, and other virtues. But their life was a mystery that can be fathomed but by few (18:1-22, and C. 133).

Knowledge is for Allah: be on your guard against idle conjectures and cocksure hopes. Learn from the Quran the Parable of the man who is puffed up with this world's goods and is brought to naught (18:23-44, and C. 134).

This life is uncertain and variable: goodness and virtue are better and more durable. For the Day of Reckoning will come, with its Mercy and its Wrath (18:45-59, and C. 135).

Moses in his thirst for knowledge forgot his limitations. Patience and faith were enjoined on him, and he understood when the paradoxes of Life were explained (18:60-82, and C. 136).

Dhu al Qarnayn had a wide dominion; he punished the guilty and rewarded the good; he protected the weak from the lawless; but he had faith, and valued the guidance of Allah. Allah is One, and His service is righteousness (18:83-110, and C. 137).

C.133 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(18:1-22)

The Book of Revelation gives straight
Direction to make our lives straight-
To warn us against Evil and guide us
To the Good everlasting. Teach the Truth.
But fret not about men rejecting it.
The Parable of the Companions of the Cave
Shows how Allah works wonders beyond
Our fathoming: how Faith is a sure
Refuge in ways we know not; how
Time itself works Allah's Plan
Before we know how it passes;
How He can give us rest, and raise
Us back to life against all odds;
And how futile it is to engage
In controversies about matters we know not.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

... الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

1. Praise be to Allah,

C2325. See n. 2324 to 17:111.

The theme of the last Surah, that Allah is good and worthy of all praise from His creatures, to whom He has granted a clear revelation, is continued in this Surah. The spirit of man makes gradual progress upwards, through the grace and mercy of Allah.

... الَّذِي أَنزَلَ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَل لَّهُ عِوَجَا (١)

Who hath sent to His Servant the Book, and hath allowed therein no Crookedness:

C2326. Some people's idea of a Sacred Book is that it should be full of mysteries-dark corners, ambiguous expressions, words so far removed from human speech that they cover anything or nothing.

Pagan oracles were couched in language which suggested one meaning to the hearer and claimed to have the very opposite meaning in the light of events which actually happened subsequently. They were distinctly crooked, not straight.

In the next verse the word "Straight" (qaiyim) is used to characterize the Quran, in contrast to this word "crooked" ('iwaj).

See also 19:36, n. 2488.

قَيِّمًا لِّيُنذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِن لَّدُنْهُ...

2. (He hath made it) Straight (and Clear) in order that He may warn (the godless) of a terrible Punishment from Him,

C2327. Qaiyim:

- straight, that which has no bends and no corners to mystify people,
- that which speaks clearly and unambiguously,
- that which guides to the right path.

Cf. 9:36, where the adjective is used for a straight usage, in contrast to usages, which tend to mystify and deceive people.

The Quran is above all things straight, clear, and perspicuous. Its directions are plain for everyone to understand.

Any book that deals with the highest mysteries of spiritual life must necessarily have portions whose full meaning is clearer to some minds than to others not so well prepared. But here there is nowhere any mystification, any desire to wrap up things in dark sayings repugnant to human reason. Allah's purpose is to give clear warning of spiritual dangers and lead up to the highest bliss.

... وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا (٢)

and that He may give Glad Tidings to the Believers who work righteous deeds, that they shall have a goodly Reward.

مَاكِثِينَ فِيهِ أَبَدًا (٣)

3. Wherein they shall remain forever:

C2328. Cf. 4:122, 43:71, 65:11, 98:8.

وَيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا (٤)

4. Further, that He may warn those (also) who say, "Allah hath begotten a son":

C2329. The warning is not only needed for those who deny Allah or deny His Message, but also for those whose false ideas of Allah degrade religion in supposing that Allah begot a son, for Allah is One and is High above any ideas of physical reproduction.

مَّا لَهُم بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا لِآبَائِهِمْ...

5. No knowledge have they of such a thing, nor had their fathers.

... كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ...

It is a grievous thing that issues from their mouths as a saying.

C2330. The attribution of a son "begotten" to Allah has no basis in fact or in reason.

It is only a "word" or "saying" that issues out of their mouths. It is not even a dogma that is reasoned out or can be explained in any way that is consistent with the sublime attributes of Allah.

... إِن يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا (٥)

What they say is nothing but falsehood!

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِن لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا (٦)

6. Thou wouldst only, perchance, fret thyself to death, following after them, in grief, if they believe not in this Message.

C2331. In a reasonable world the preaching of a reasonable Faith like that of Islam would win universal

acceptance. But the world is not altogether reasonable. It caused great distress to the unselfish Preacher of Islam that his Message met with so much opposition. He wanted to point the way to salvation. He only got, in the Makkans period, abuse from the chiefs of the Makkans- abuse and persecution, not only for himself but for the Truth which he was preaching.

A heart less stout than his might have been appalled at what seemed the hopeless task of reclaiming the world from falsehood, superstition, selfishness, wrong, and oppression. He is here consoled, and told that he was not to fret himself to death: he was nobly doing his duty, and, as after-events showed, the seed of Truth was already germinating, although this was not visible at the time.

Besides, these "chiefs" and "leaders" were only strutting in false plumes: their glory was soon to fade for ever.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا ...

7. That which is on earth We have made but as a glittering show for the earth,

C2332. This world's goods- worldly power, glory, wealth, position, and all that men scramble for,- are but a fleeting show.

The possession or want of them does not betoken a man's real value or position in the coming world, the world which is to endure. Yet they have their uses.

They test a man's sterling quality. He who becomes their slave loses rank in the next world. He who uses them if he gets them, and does not fall into despair if he does not get them, shows his true mettle and quality. His conduct proclaims him.

لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (٧) ...

in order that We may test them -- as to which of them are best in conduct.

وَإِنَّا لَجَاعِلُونَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيدًا جُرُزًا (٨)

8. Verily what is on earth We shall make but as dust and dry soil (without growth or herbage).

C2333. The fairest sights on the earth will become as dust and waste when this earth vanishes, and true spiritual values are restored.

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ ...

9. Or dost thou reflect

C2334. A wonderful story or allegory is now referred to. Its lessons are:

- the relativity of Time,
- the unreality of the position of oppressor and oppressed, persecutor and persecuted, on this earth,
- the truth of the final Resurrection, when true values will be restored, and
- the potency of Faith and Prayer to lead to the Right.

... أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ ...

that the Companions of the Cave

C2335. The unbelieving Quraish were in the habit of putting posers to the holy Prophet-questions which they got from Christians and Jews, which they thought the Prophet would be unable to answer. In this way they hoped to discredit him.

One of these questions was about the floating Christian story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. The Prophet not only told them the main story but pointed out the variations that were current, and rebuked men for disputing about such details (18:22).

Most important of all, he treated the story (under inspiration) as a parable, pointing to lessons of the highest value. This is Revelation in the highest sense of the term.

The story is recapitulated in n. 2337 below.

... وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا (٩)

and of the Inscription were wonders among Our Signs?

C2336. Raqim: Inscription. So interpreted by the Jalalayn, and the majority of Commentators agree. See n. 2337 below.

Others think it was the name of the dog: see 18:18, and n. 2350 below.

إِذْ أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا...

10. Behold, the youths betook themselves to the Cave: they said,

C2337. The bare Christian story (without the spiritual lessons taught in the Quran) is told in Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (end of chapter 33).

In the reign of a Roman Emperor who persecuted the Christians, seven Christian youths of Ephesus left the town and hid themselves in a cave in a mountain near by. They fell asleep, and remained asleep for some generations or centuries. When the wall which sealed up the cave was being demolished, the youths awoke.

They still thought of the world in which they had previously lived. They had no idea of the duration of time. But when one of them went to the town to purchase provisions, he found that the whole world had changed. The Christian religion, instead of being persecuted was fashionable: in fact it was now the State religion. His dress and speech, and the money which he brought, seemed to belong to another world. This attracted attention. The great ones of the land visited the Cave, and verified the tale by questioning the man's Companions.

When the story became very popular and circulated throughout the Roman Empire, we may well suppose that an Inscription was put up at the mouth of the Cave. See verse 9 and n. 2336.

This inscription was probably to be seen for many years afterwards, as Ephesus was a famous city on the west coast of Asia Minor, about forty to fifty miles south of Smyrna. Later on, the Khalifah Wathiq (842-846 A.C.) sent an expedition to examine and identify the locality, as he did about the Dhul al Qarnayn barrier in Central Asia (Appendix VI at the end of this Surah).

A popular story circulating from mouth to mouth would necessarily be vague as to dates and vary very much in details. Somewhere about the 6th century A.C. a Syriac writer reduced it to writing. He suggested that the youths were seven in number; that they went to sleep in the reign of the Emperor Decius (who reigned from 249 to 251 A.D., and who was a violent persecutor of Christianity); and that they awoke in the reign of Theodosius 11, who reigned from 408 to 450 A.D. In our literature Decius is known as Daqyanus (from the adjectival Latin from Decianus), and the name stands as a symbol of injustice and oppression, and also of things old fashioned and out-of-date, as *res Decianae* must have been two or three centuries after Decius.

... رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا (١٠)

"Our Lord! bestow on us Mercy from Thyself, and dispose of our affair for us in the right way!

C2338. The youths hid in the cave, but they trusted in Allah, and made over their whole case to Him in prayer.

Then they apparently fell asleep, and knew nothing of what was happening in the world outside.

... فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ

11. Then We drew (a veil) over their ears,

C2339. Drew (a veil) over their ears: i.e., sealed their ears, so that they heard nothing. As they were in the Cave they saw nothing. So they were completely cut off from the outer world.

It was as if they had died, with their knowledge and ideas remaining at the point of time when they had entered the Cave. It is as if a watch stops at the exact moment of some accident, and any one taking it up afterwards can precisely fix the time of the accident.

... فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا (١١)

for a number of years, in the cave, (so that they heard not):

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ ...

12. Then We roused them,

C2340. Roused them: or raised them up from their sleep or whatever condition they had fallen into (18:18),

so that they began to perceive the things around them, but only with the memories of the time at which they had ceased to be in touch with the world.

... لِنَعْلَمَ أَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْصَى لِمَا لَبِثُوا أَمَدًا (١٢)

in order to test which of the two parties was best at calculating the term of years they had tarried!

C2341. When they awoke to consciousness, they had lost all count of time. Though they had all entered together, and lain together in the same place for the same length of time, their impressions of the time they had passed were quite different.

Time is thus related to our own internal experiences. We have to learn the lesson that men as good as ourselves may yet differ as to their reactions to certain facts, and that in such matters disputes are unseemly. It is best to say. "Allah knows best" (18:19).

Section 2

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِالْحَقِّ...

13. We relate to thee their story in truth:

... إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى (١٣)

they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance:

C2342. Their Faith carried them higher and higher on the road to Truth. Faith is cumulative. Each step leads higher and higher, by the grace and mercy of Allah.

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

14. We gave strength to their hearts:

C2343. So that they were not afraid to speak out openly, and protest the truth of the Unity which they clearly saw in their own minds and hearts.

... إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا...

Behold, they stood up and said:

C2344. We may suppose them to have taken their stand and made a public protest before they betook themselves to the Cave (18:16).

The story really begins at 18:13, and the verses 18:9-12 may be considered as introductory.

As the emphasis is on spiritual lessons, the facts stated in the introductory part are passed over lightly in the story.

... رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُوَ مِن دُونِهِ إِلَٰهًا...

"Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth: never shall we call upon any god other than Him:

... لَّقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذًا شَطَطًا (١٤)

if we did; we should indeed have uttered an enormity!"

هَٰؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ آلِهَةً...

15. "These our people have taken for worship gods other than Him:

C2345. Besides the heathen gods, the cult of the Emperors also became fashionable in the Roman Empire in the first three centuries of the Christian Era. The statue of Diana (Artemis) at Ephesus had been one of the wonders of the ancient world.

The city was a great seaport and the capital of Roman Asia. We may therefore imagine how the heathen cults must have flourished there.

St. Paul spent three years preaching there, and was mobbed and assaulted, and compelled to leave (Acts, 19:1-4).

... لَّوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ...

why do they not bring forward an authority clear (and convincing) for what they do?

... فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا (١٥)

Who doth more wrong than such as invent a falsehood against Allah?

وَإِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَأْوُوا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ...

16. "When ye turn away from them and the things they worship other than Allah betake yourselves to the Cave:

... يَنشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُم مِّن رَّحمته ويُهَيِّئْ لَكُم مِّنْ أَمْرِكُم مِّرْفَقًا (١٦)

your Lord will shower His mercies on you and dispose of your affair towards comfort and ease."

C2346. That is,

'do not be afraid of anything: put your whole case in the hands of Allah: at present you are being persecuted; he will solve your difficulties and give you ease and comfort'.

The public protest ends at verse 15. In verse 16 they are taking counsel among themselves. After they go into the Cave, verse 17 introduces us to the scene where they are lying in the midst of the Cave in tranquil confidence in Allah.

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَت تَّزَاوَرُ عَن كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ...

17. Thou wouldst have seen the sun, when it rose, declining to the right from their Cave,

C2347. In the latitude of Ephesus, 38* north, i.e., well above the sun's northern declination, a cave opening to north, would never have the heat of the sun within it, as the sunny side would be the south.

If the youths lay on their backs with their faces looking to the north, i.e., towards the entrance of the Cave, the sun would rise on their right side, declining to the south, and set on their left sides, leaving them cool and comfortable.

... وَإِذَا غَرَبَت تَّقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ...

and when it set, turning away from them to the left,

... وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ مِّنْهُ...

while they lay in the open space in the midst of the Cave.

... ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ...

Such are among the Signs of Allah:

... مَن يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِي...

he whom Allah guides is rightly guided;

C2348. The youths, having faith and trust in Allah, found safety and refuge in the Cave.

They were protected from the persecution and violence of the heathen. Their prayer (18:16) was heard.

... وَمَن يُضْلِلْ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا (١٧)

but he whom Allah leaves to stray -- for him wilt thou find no protector to lead him to the Right Way.

Section 3

وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ أَيْقَاظًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ...

18. Thou wouldst have deemed them awake, whilst they were asleep,

C2349. Perhaps their eyes were open, even though their senses were sealed in sleep. They turned about on their sides as men do in sleep.

... وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ...

and We turned them on their right and their left sides:

... وَكَلْبُهُم بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ...

their dog stretching forth his two forelegs on the threshold:

C2350. The name of their dog is traditionally known as Qitmir, but see n. 2336 above.

... لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا (١٨)

if thou hadst come up on to them, thou wouldst have certainly turned back from them in flight, and wouldst certainly have been filled with terror of them.

C2351. This graphic picture of the sleepers explains the human mechanism by which their safety was ensured by Allah from their Pagan enemies.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ...

19. Such (being their state), We raised them up (from sleep) that they might question each other.

C2352. This is the point of the story.

Their own human impressions were to be compared, each with the other. They were to be made to see that with the best goodwill and the most honest enquiry they might reach different conclusions; that they were not to waste their time in vain controversies, but to get on to the main business of life; and that Allah alone had full knowledge of the things that seem to us so strange, or inconsistent, or inexplicable, or that produce different impressions on different minds.

If they entered the Cave in the morning and woke up in the afternoon, one of them might well think they had been there only a few hours-only part of a day. This relative or fallacious impression of Time also gives us an inkling of the state when there will be no Time, of the Resurrection when all our little impressions of this life will be corrected by the final Reality.

This mystery of time has puzzled many contemplative minds. Cf. "Dark time that haunts us with the briefness of our days" (Thomas Wolfe in "Of Time and the River").

... قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ...

Said one of them, "How long have ye stayed (here)?"

... قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ...

They said, "We have stayed (perhaps) a day, or part of a day."

... قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ...

(At length) they (all) said, "Allah (alone) knows best how long ye have stayed here...

... فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُم بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ...

Now send ye then one of you with this money of yours to the town:

C2353. They now give up barren controversy and come to the practical business of life. But their thoughts are conditioned by the state of things that existed when they entered the Cave.

The money they carried was the money coined in the reign of the monarch who persecuted the. Religion of Unity and favoured the false cults of Paganism.

... فَلْيَنظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُم بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ...

let him find out which is the best food (to be had) and bring some to you, that (ye may) satisfy hunger herewith:

C2354. Best food:, i.e., purest, most wholesome perhaps also most suitable for those who rejected idol worship, i.e., not dedicated to idols.

For they still imagined the world in the same state in which they had known it before they entered the Cave.

... وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا (١٩)

and let him behave with care and courtesy, and let him not inform anyone about you.

إِنَّهُمْ إِن يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ...

20. "For if thy should come upon you, they would stone you or force you to return to their cult,

C2355. They think that the world had not changed, and that the fierce persecution they knew. was still raging, under which a man had to pay by his life for his religious faith, if he could not conform to Pagan worship.

... وَلَن تُفْلِحُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا (٢٠)

and in that case ye would never attain prosperity."

C2356. That is, never succeed in keeping your religion.

To become a renegade, to give up the Truth which you have won, simply on account of the fear of men, is the most despicable form of cowardice, and would rightly close the door of salvation if strict justice were to be done. But even then Allah's Mercy comes to the coward's aid so long as the door of repentance is open.

... وَكَذَٰلِكَ

21. Thus

C2357. Thus: in this way, by these means, i.e., by the sending out of one of the Sleepers with the old money to the town to buy provisions. His old-fashioned dress, appearance, and speech, and the old uncurrent money which he brought, at once drew the attention of people to him .

When they learnt his story, they realized that Allah, Who can protect His servants thus and raise them up from sleep after such a long time, has power to raise up men for the Resurrection, and that His promise of goodness and mercy to those who serve Him is true and was exemplified in this striking way.

On the other hand, to the men of the Cave themselves, it became clear that Allah can change the situation before we are aware, and our hope in Him is not futile, and that even when we are on the brink of despair, a revolution is surely working in the world before the world itself realises it.

... أَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

did We make their case known to the people, that they might know that the promise of Allah is true,

... وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا...

and that there can be no doubt about the Hour of Judgment.

... إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ...

Behold they dispute among themselves as to their affair.

C2358. The perversity of man is such that as soon as ever a glimpse of truth becomes manifest, men fall into controversies about it.

The Sleepers could not judge about the duration of their stay in the Cave, but they wisely left the matter and attended to the urgent business of their lives.

The townsfolk could not agree as to the significance of the event; they fell to discussing immaterial details.

What sort of a memorial should they raise?

a house or a place of worship or a tablet?

The place of worship was built. But the real significance was missed until explained in the Quran.

... فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُنْيَانًا...

(Some) said, "Construct a building over them":

... رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ...

their Lord knows best about them:

... قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَى أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا (٢١)

those who prevailed over their affair said, "Let us surely build a place of worship over them."

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ...

22. (Some) say they were three, the dog being the fourth among them;

... وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا بِالْغَيْبِ...

(others) say they were five, the dog being the sixth -- doubtfully guessing at the unknown;

C2359. The controversy in after ages raged about the number of the Sleepers: were they three or five or seven?

People answered, not from knowledge, but from conjecture.

Gibbon's version, which has now become best known, makes the number of Sleepers seven.

The point was immaterial: the real point was the spiritual lesson.

... وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ...

(yet others) say they were seven, the dog being the eighth.

... قُل رَّبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِعِدَّتِهِم مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ...

Say thou: "My Lord knoweth best their number; it is but few that know their (real case)."

C2360. The true significance of the story is known only to a few. Most men discuss futile' details, which are not in their knowledge.

... فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا ...

Enter not, therefore, into controversies concerning them, except on a matter that is clear,

C2361. It is unprofitable to enter such immaterial controversies and many others that have been waged about Religion by shallow men from time immemorial.

Yet, if there is a matter of clear knowledge from experience that matters, we must openly proclaim it, that the world may be brought to listen to Allah's Truth.

... وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِم مِّنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (٢٢)

nor consult any of them about (the affair of) the Sleepers.

C2362. Vulgar story-mongers as such know little of the true significance of stories and parables. We have a clear exposition in the Quran.

What need is there to go into details of the number of men in the Cave, or of the time they remained there?

C.134 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(18:23-44)

True knowledge is with Allah alone.

We are not to dispute on matters

Of conjecture, but to rely on the Truth

That comes from Allah, as in Parable.
The man who piles up wealth
And is puffed up with this world's goods,
Despising those otherwise endowed,
Will come to an evil end,
For his hopes were not built on Allah.

Section 4

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا (٢٣)

23. Nor say of anything, "I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow" --

إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ...

24. Without adding, "So please Allah!"

C2363. Verses 23 and 24 are parenthetical. We must never rely upon our own resources so much as to forget Allah. If by any chance we do forget, we must come back to Him and keep Him in remembrance, as did the Companions of the Cave.

... وَاذْكُر رَّبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ...

And call thy Lord to mind when thou forgettest,

... وَقُلْ عَسَىٰ أَن يَهْدِيَنِ رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَٰذَا رَشَدًا (٢٤)

and say, "I hope that my Lord will guide me ever closer (even) than this to the right road."

C2364. In geometry the perfect circle is an ideal. Any given circle that we draw is not so perfect that we cannot draw one closer to the ideal. So in our life, there is always the hope of drawing closer and closer to Allah.

وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا (٢٥)

25. So they stayed in their Cave three hundred years, and (some) add nine (more).

C2365. This verse should be read with the next verse.

In the floating oral tradition the duration of time in the Cave was given differently in different versions. When the tradition was reduced to writing, some Christian writers (e.g., Simeon Metaphrastes) named 372 years, some less.

In round numbers 300 years in the solar Calendar would amount to 309 in the lunar Calendar. But the next verse points out that all these are mere conjectures: the number is known to Allah alone.

The authority on which Gibbon relies mentions two definite reigns, that of Decius (249-251 A.D.) and that of Theodosius 11 (408-450 A.D.). Taking 250 and 450, we get an interval of 200 years. But the point of the story does not lie in the name of any given Emperor, but in the fact that the beginning of the period coincided with an Emperor who persecuted: the Emperor's name at the end of the period may be taken as approximately correct, because the story was recorded within two generations afterwards.

One of the worst Emperors to persecute the Christians was Nero who reigned from 54 to 68. If we took the end of his reign (A.D. 68) as the initial point, and (say) 440 A.D. as the final point, we get the 372 years of Simeon Metaphrastes.

But none of these writers knew any more than we do. Our best course is to follow the Quranic injunction, "Say, Allah knows best how long they stayed" (18:26).

There is also a rebuke implied: 'do not imitate these men who love mischievous controversies!' After all, we are given the narrative more as a parable than as a story.

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا...

26. Say:

"Allah knows best how long they stayed:

... لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

with Him is (the knowledge of) the secrets of the heavens and the earth:

... أَبْصِرْ بِهِ وَأَسْمِعْ...

how clearly He sees, how finely He hears (everything)!

... مَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ ...

They have no protector other than Him;

C2366. Who are **"they"** in this sentence?

- They may be the Companions of the Cave, for they put themselves under the protection of Allah, and disowned all attribution of partners to Him. Or
- "they" may refer to the people in general who go wrong and become *"Mushriks"* i.e., attribute imaginary partners to Allah.

... وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٦)

nor does He share His Command with any person whatsoever.

C2367. His Command: i.e., Allah's sovereignty of the world, or in His Judgment on the Day of Judgment.

وَاتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِن كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ...

27. And recite (and teach) what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord:

... لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَن تَجِدَ مِن دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا (٢٧)

none can change His Words,

C2368. His Words: His Commands, Decrees, Orders.

and none wilt thou find as a refuge other than Him.

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ...

28. And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking his Face;

C2369. Cf. 6:52 and n. 870.

The true servants of Allah are those whose hearts are turned to Him morning, noon, and night, and who seek

not worldly gain, but Allah's Grace, Allah's own Self, His Presence and nearness.

Even if they are poor in this world's goods, their society gives far more inward and spiritual satisfaction than worldly grandeur or worldly attractions.

... وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life;

... وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا...

nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us,

... وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا (٢٨)

one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds.

C2370. For those who stray from Allah's path, Allah's Grace is ever anxious: it seeks to reclaim them and bring them back to the path.

If such a one resists, and follows his own lusts, a point is reached when his case becomes hopeless. Allah's Grace does not then Teach him, and he is abandoned to his pride and insolence. Beware of following the example or advice of such a one or seeking his society, or hankering after his wretched idols.

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ...

29. Say, "The Truth is from your Lord":

... فَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِن وَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ...

let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject (it):

C2371. Our choice in our limited Free-will involves a corresponding personal responsibility. We are offered the Truth: again and again is it pressed on our attention,

If we reject it, we must take all the terrible consequences which are prefigured in the Fire of Hell. Its flames and roof will completely enclose us like a tent.

Ordinarily there is water to quench the heat of thirst: here the only drink will be like molten brass, thick, heavy, burning, sizzling. Before it reaches the mouth of the unfortunates, drops of it will scald their faces as it is poured out.

... إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا...

for the wrongdoers We have prepared a Fire whose (smoke and flames), like the wall and roof of a tent, will hem them in:

... وَإِن يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ...

if they implore relief they will be granted water like melted brass that will scald their faces.

... بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا (٢٩)

How dreadful the drink!

How uncomfortable a couch to recline on!

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا (٣٠)

30. As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a (single) righteous deed.

C2372. The righteous will be rewarded, as has been said again and again, beyond their merits: 28:84: 30:39.

Not a single good deed of theirs will lose its reward, and the mercy of Allah will blot out their sins.

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ...

31. For them will be Gardens of Eternity; beneath them rivers will flow;

... يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِن ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِّن سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ...

they will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade;

C2373. Heaven is figured by all the pictures of ease and comfort which we can imagine in our present state:

Gardens: perpetual springs of crystal water, which we can see as in a landscape from above; the finest and most costly ornaments; the most beautiful clothes to wear; green is the colour mentioned, because it is the most refreshing to the eye, and fits in well with the Garden; the wearer takes the choice of fine silk or heavy brocade; and for rest and comfort, high thrones of dignity on which the blessed ones recline.

... مُّتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ...

they will recline therein on raised thrones.

... نِعْمَ الثَّوَابُ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا (٣١)

How good the recompense!

How beautiful a couch to recline on!

C2374. This picture is in parallel contrast to the picture of Misery in the last verse.

Section 5

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ...

32. Set forth to them the parable of two men:

... جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ...

for one of them We provided two gardens of grapevines and surrounded them with date-palms:

... وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا (٣٢)

in between the two We placed corn-fields.

C2375. Here is a simple parable of the contrast between two men.

- One was purse-proud, and forgot that what he had was from Allah, by way of a trust and a trial in this life.
- The other boasted of nothing: his trust was in Allah.

The worldly wealth of the first was destroyed, and he had nothing left. The second was the happier in the end.

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا...

33. Each of those gardens brought forth its produce, and failed not in the least therein:

... وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلَالَهُمَا نَهَرًا (٣٣)

in the midst of them We caused a river to flow.

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ...

34. (Abundant) was the produce this man had: he said to his companion, in the course of a mutual argument:

... أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا (٣٤)

"More wealth have I than you, and more honor and power in (my following of) men."

C2376. The two men began to compare notes.

The arrogant one was puffed up with his possessions, his income, and his large family and following, and thought in his self-complacency that it would last for ever.

He was also wrong in looking down on his Companion, who, though less affluent, was the better man of the two.

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ...

35. He went into his garden in a state (of mind) unjust to his soul:

C2377. It was not wealth that ruined him, but the attitude of his mind. He was unjust, not so much to his neighbour, as to his own soul. In his love of the material, he forgot or openly defied the spiritual.

As verse 37 shows, he took his companion with him, to impress him with his own importance, but the companion was unmoved.

... قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَن تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا (٣٥)

He said, "I deem not that this will ever perish.

وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً...

36. "Nor do I deem that the Hour (of Judgment) will (ever) come:

... وَلَئِن رُّدِدتُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنقَلَبًا (٣٦)

even if I am brought back to my Lord, I shall surely find (there) something better in exchange."

C2378. Here comes out the grasping spirit of the materialist.

In his mind **"better"** means more wealth and more power, of the kind he was enjoying in this life, although in reality, even what he had, rested on hollow foundations and was doomed to perish and bring him down with it.

قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ...

37. His companion said to him, in the course of the argument with him:

... أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّاكَ رَجُلًا (٣٧)

"Dost thou deny Him Who created thee out of dust, then out of a sperm-drop, then fashioned thee into a man?

C2379. The three stages of man's creation:

first dust, or clay, itself created out of nothing and forming the physical basis of his body; then, out of the produce of the earth as incorporated in the parents body, the sperm drop (with the corresponding receptive element), and then when the different elements were mixed in due proportion, and the soul was breathed into him, the fashioned man.

Cf. 87:2, and 15:28-29.

لَّٰكِنَّا هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا (٣٨)

38. "But (I think) for my part that He is Allah, my Lord, and none shall I associate with my Lord.

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ...

39. "Why didst thou not, as thou wentest into thy garden, say:

'Allah's Will (be done)!

There is no power but with Allah!'

C2380. The companion's argument divides itself into five parts.

1. He remonstrates against the proud man denying Allah.
2. He, from his own spiritual experience, proclaims that Allah is One and that He is good.
3. He points out to him the better way of enjoying Allah's gifts, with gratitude to Him.
4. He expresses contentment and satisfaction in Allah's dealings with him.
5. He gives a warning of the fleeting nature of this world's goods and the certainty of Allah's punishment for inordinate vanity.

... إِن تُرَنِ أَنَا أَقَلَّ مِنكَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا (٣٩)

If thou dost see me less than thee in wealth and sons,

... فَعَسَى رَبِّي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِ خَيْرًا مِّن جَنَّتِكَ

40. "It may be that my Lord will give me something better than thy garden,

... وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتُصْبِحَ صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا (٤٠)

and that He will send on thy garden thunderbolts (by way of reckoning) from heaven, making it (but) slippery sand! --

C2381. The punishment was that of thunderbolts **(husbanan)**, but the general meaning of the word includes any punishment by way of a reckoning (*hisdb*), and I think that an earthquake is also implied, as it alters water-courses, diverts channels underground, throws up silt and sand, and covers large areas with ruin.

أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَاؤُهَا غَوْرًا فَلَن تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ طَلَبًا (٤١)

41. "Or the water of the garden will run off underground so that thou wilt never be able to find it."

وَأُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ فَأَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنفَقَ فِيهَا...

42. So his fruits (and enjoyment) were encompassed (with ruin), and he remained twisting and turning his hands over what he had spent on his property,

C2382. "Fruits", "spent", "twisting of the hands", should all be understood in a wide metaphorical sense, as well as the literal sense.

He had great income and satisfaction, which were all gone. What resources he had lavished on his property! His thoughts had been engrossed on it; his hopes had been built on it; it had become the absorbing passion of his life. If he had only looked to Allah, instead of to the ephemeral goods of this world!

... وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا...

which had (now) tumbled to pieces to its very foundations,

... وَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا (٤٢)

and he could only say,

"Woe is me! would I had never ascribed partners to my Lord and Cherisher!"

C2383. In this case, in his mind, there was his own Self and his Mammon as rivals to Allah!

وَلَمْ تَكُن لَّهُ فِئَةٌ يَنصُرُونَهُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنتَصِرًا (٤٣)

43. Nor had he numbers to help him against Allah, nor was he able to deliver himself.

C2384. He had built up connections and obligated dependents, and was proud of having his "quiver full". But where were all things when the reckoning came? He could not help himself; how could others be expected to help him!

هُنَالِكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقِّ...

44. There, the (only) protection comes from Allah, the True One.

... هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا (٤٤)

He is the Best to reward, and the Best to give success.

C2385. All else is vanity, uncertainty, the sport of Time. The only hope or truth is from Allah. Other rewards and other successes are illusory: the best Reward and the best Success come from Allah.

C.135 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(18:45-59)

The life of this world is ephemeral,
And its gains will not last. Good Deeds
Are the best of possessions in Allah's sight;
All will be leveled up on the Day
Of Judgement, and a new Order created
On the basis of Truth, according to the Book
Of Deeds. Pride is the root of Evil,
Rebellion, and wrong. Who will choose
Evil ones in preference to Allah? Let us accept
Truth, for though Falsehood may flourish
For a time, it must perish in the end.

Section 6

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

45. Set forth to them the similitude of the life of this world:

... كَمَاء أَنزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاء فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ...

it is like the rain which We send down from the skies: the earth's vegetation absorbs it,

... فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيَاحُ...

but soon it becomes dry stubble, which the winds do scatter:

C2386. Rain-water is a good thing in itself, but it does not last, and you can build no solid foundations on it.

It is soon absorbed in the earth, and produces the flourishing appearance of grass and vegetation-for a time. Soon these decay, and become as dry stubble, which the least wind from any quarter will blow about like a thing of no importance.

The water is gone, and so is the vegetation to which it lent a brave show of luxuriance temporarily. Such is the life of this world, contrasted with the inner and real Life, which looks to the Hereafter.

Allah is the only enduring Power we can look to, supreme over all.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا (٤٥)

it is (only) Allah Who prevails over all things.

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

46. Wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world:

... وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِندَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا (٤٦)

but the things that endure, Good Deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best as (the foundation for) hopes.

C2387. Other things are fleeting: but Good Deeds have a lasting value in the sight of Allah. They are best as (or for) rewards in two ways:

1. they flow from us by the Grace of Allah, and are themselves rewards for our Faith:
2. they become the foundation of our hopes for the highest rewards in the Hereafter.

وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً...

47. One Day We shall remove the mountains, and thou wilt see the earth as a level stretch,

C2388. On the Day of Judgment none of our present landmarks will remain.

... وَحَشَرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (٤٧)

and We shall gather them, all together, nor shall We leave out any one of them.

وَعُرِضُوا عَلَى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا...

48. And they will be marshalled before thy Lord in ranks, (with the announcement),

... لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ...

"Now have ye come to Us (bare) as We created you first:

C2389. We shall stand as we were created, with none of the adventitious possessions that we collected in this life, which will all have vanished.

... بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَلَّن نَّجْعَلَ لَكُم مَّوْعِدًا (٤٨)

aye, ye thought We shall not fulfil the appointment made to you to meet (Us)!":

C2390. The skeptics will now at length be convinced of the Reality which will be upon them.

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ...

49. And the Book (of Deeds) will be placed (before you); and thou wilt see the sinful in great terror because of what is (recorded) therein;

... وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ...

they will say,

"Ah! woe to us! what a book is this!

... لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا...

It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes account thereof!"

... وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا...

They will find all that they did, placed before them:

... وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا (٤٩)

and not one will thy Lord treat with injustice.

C2391. Personal responsibility, for all deeds in this life will then be enforced. But it will be done with perfect justice.

Expressed in the forms of this world, it will amount to a clear statement of all we did in this life; the record will be put before us to convince us.

As it will be a perfect record, with no omissions and no wrong entries, it will be perfectly convincing. Where there is punishment, it has been earned by the wrong-doer's own deeds, not imposed on him unjustly.

Section 7

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ ...

50. Behold! We said to the angels, "Bow down to Adam":

C2392. Cf. 2:34, where the story is told of the fall of mankind through Adam.

Here the point is referred to in order to bring home the individual responsibility of the erring soul.

Iblis is your enemy; you have been told his history; will you prefer to go to him rather than to the merciful Allah, your Creator and Cherisher?

What a false exchange you would make!'

... فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ...

they bowed down except Iblis.

... كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ...

He was one of the Jinns, and he broke the Command of his Lord.

C2393. Cf. 6:100, n. 929.

... أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاء مِن دُونِي ...

Will ye then take him and his progeny as protectors rather than Me?

C2394. Satan's progeny: we need not take the epithet only in a literal sense.

All his followers are also his progeny.

... وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ...

And they are enemies to you!

... بِئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا (٥٠)

Evil would be the exchange for the wrongdoers!

C2395. Out of the limited free-will that man has, if he were to choose Evil instead of Good, Satan instead of Allah, what a dreadful choice it would be!

It would really be an evil exchange. For man is Allah's creature, cared for and cherished by Him. He abandons his Cherisher to become the slave of his enemy!

مَا أَشْهَدتُّهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ أَنفُسِهِمْ...

51. I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor (even) their own creation:

... وَمَا كُنتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا (٥١)

nor is it for Me to take as helpers such as lead (men) astray!

C2396. Allah wants man's good: how can He take Evil for His partner?

وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ...

52. One Day He will say, "Call on those whom ye thought to be My partners,"

... فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ ...

and they will call on them, but they will not listen to them;

... وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّوْبِقًا (٥٢)

and We shall make for them a place of common perdition.

C2397. Some Commentators construe: "And We shall make a partition between them": i.e., the Evil ones will not even be seen by their misguided followers, much as the latter may go on calling on them.

وَرَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم مُّوَاقِعُوهَا...

53. And the Sinful shall see the Fire and apprehend that they have to all therein;

... وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا (٥٣)

no means will they find to turn away therefrom.

Section 8

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ...

54. We have explained in detail in this Qur'án, for the benefit of mankind, every kind of similitude:

... وَكَانَ الْإِنسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا (٥٤)

but man is, in most things, contentious.

C2398. If men had not cultivated the habit of contention and obstinacy, they would have found that the parables and similitudes of Scripture had fully met their difficulties, and they would gladly have obeyed the call of Allah.

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَن يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءهُمُ الْهُدَى وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ...

55. And what is there to keep back men from believing, now that Guidance has come to them, nor from praying for forgiveness from their Lord,

... إِلَّا أَن تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ...

but that (they ask that) the ways of the ancients be repeated with them,

C2399. But man's obstinacy or contrariness asks or calls for a repetition of what happened to the wicked and those who rejected Faith in ancient times.

Out of curiosity, or by way of challenge, they seem to court the Punishment and ask that it be brought to pass at once.

But it will come soon enough, and then they will think it too early! Cf. 13:6 and n. 1810.

... أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا (٥٥)

or the Wrath be brought to them face to face?

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ...

56. We only send the Messengers to give glad tidings and to give warnings:

C2400. The Prophets of Allah are not sent to humour us with dialectics or satisfy the vulgar curiosity for miracles or dark unusual things.

There is no "crookedness" (18:1) in their preaching. They come to preach the Truth, -not in an abstract way, but with special reference to our conduct.

They give us the good news of salvation lest we despair in the presence of Sin, and to warn us clearly of the dangers of Evil. Vain controversies about words only weaken their mission, or turn it into ridicule.

The ungodly have a trick also of treating the earnest preaching to them itself as a jest and ridiculing it.

... وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ...

but the Unbelievers dispute with vain argument, in order therewith to weaken the truth,

... وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا (٥٦)

and they treat My Signs as a jest, as also the fact that they are warned!

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ...

57. And who doth more wrong than one who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord,

... فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ...

but turns away from them, forgetting the (deeds) which his hands have sent forth?

C2401. Considering the power of sin, and how it gets hold of the hearts of men, and considering all the wrongs that men have done, it is the height of folly and injustice

on their part to turn away from warnings which are given expressly for their good.

But a stage of callousness is reached, when, by their own choice, they have rendered themselves impervious to Allah's Grace. At that stage a veil is put over their hearts and they are left alone for a time, that they may commune with themselves and perhaps repent and seek Allah's Mercy again. If they do not, it is their own loss.

See next verse.

... إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَن يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا...

Verily We have set veils over their hearts lest they should understand this, and over their ears, deafness.

... وَإِن تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى فَلَن يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا (٥٧)

If thou callest them to guidance, even then will they never accept guidance.

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ...

58. But your Lord is Most Forgiving, Full of Mercy.

... لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُم بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ...

If He were to call them (at once) to account for what they have earned, then surely He would have hastened their Punishment:

... بَل لَّهُم مَّوْعِدٌ لَّن يَجِدُوا مِن دُونِهِ مَوْئِلًا (٥٨)

but they have their appointed time, beyond which they will find no refuge.

C2402. Min duni hi: should we take the pronoun to refer to "the appointed time." or to "your Lord" mentioned at the beginning of the verse?

Most Commentators take the former view, and I have translated accordingly. But I agree with those who take the latter view, and the better translation would be:

"But they have their appointed time, and except with Allah, they will find no refuge."

That means that even during the period allowed them, when they are left to wander astray as they have

rejected Allah's Grace, Allah's Mercy is open to them if they will repent and return; but nothing but Allah's Mercy can save them.

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَى أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا...

59. Such were the populations We destroyed when they committed iniquities;

... وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِم مَّوْعِدًا (٥٩)

but We fixed an appointed time for their destruction.

C2403. The instances of exemplary Punishment in former times were also subject to this rule, that Allah gives plenty of rope to the wicked, in case they might turn, repent, and obtain His Mercy.

C.136 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(18:60-82)

Moses was up against mysteries
Which he wanted to explore. He searched
Out a man endued with knowledge
Derived from the divine springs from which
Flow the paradoxes of life. He is shown
Three such paradoxes and how human
Impatience is inconsistent with their true
Understanding. The highest knowledge
Comes not except by divine gift,
And a constant, patient striving,
With Faith, to apprehend something
Of the Purpose of the All-Wise Allah.

Section 9

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ...

60. Behold, Moses said to his attendant,

C2404. This episode in the story of Moses is meant to illustrate four points.

1. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Even so that wisdom did not comprehend everything, even as the whole stock of the knowledge of the present day, in the sciences and the arts, and in literature, (if it could be supposed to be gathered in one individual), does not include all knowledge. Divine knowledge, as far as man is concerned, is unlimited.

   Even after Moses received his divine mission, his knowledge was not so perfect that it could not receive further additions.

2. Constant effort is necessary to keep our knowledge square with the march of time, and such effort Moses is shown to be making.

3. The mysterious man he meets (18:65 and n. 2411), to whom Tradition assigns the name of Khidhr (literally, Green), is the type of that knowledge which is ever in contact with life as it is actually lived.

4. There are paradoxes in life;

   apparent loss may be real gain;

   apparent cruelty may be real mercy; returning good for evil may really be justice and not generosity (18:79-82).

   Allah's wisdom transcends all human calculation.

... لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّى أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ ...

"I will not give up until I reach the junction of the two seas

C2405. The most probable geographical location (if any is required in a story that is a parable) is where the two

arms of the Red Sea join together, viz., the Gulf of 'Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez.

They enclose the Sinai Peninsula, in which Moses and the Israelites spent many years in their wanderings.

... أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا (٦٠)

or (until) I spend years and years in travel."

C2406. Huqub means a long but indefinite space of time. Sometimes it is limited to 80 years.

... فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ

61. But when they reached the Junction,

C2407. literally, 'the Junction of (the space) between the two,' i.e., the point at which the two seas were united.

... بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا...

they forgot (about) their Fish,

C2408. Moses was to go and find a servant of Allah, who would instruct him in such knowledge as he had not already got. He was to take a fish with him.

The place where he was to meet his mysterious Teacher would be indicated by the fact that the fish would disappear when he got to that place.

... فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا (٦١)

which took its course through the sea (straight) as in a tunnel.

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتَاهُ آتِنَا غَدَاءنَا...

62. When they had passed on (some distance), Moses said to his attendant:

"Bring us our early meal;

... لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِن سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا (٦٢)

truly we have suffered much fatigue at this (stage of) our journey."

C2409. When they came to the Junction of the Seas, Moses forgot about the fish, and his attendant forgot to tell him of the fact that he had seen the fish escaping into the sea in a marvelous way.

They passed on, but the stages now became heavier and heavier, and more fatiguing to Moses.

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ...

63. He replied:

"Sawest thou (what happened) when we betook ourselves to the rock?

I did indeed forget (about) the Fish:

... وَمَا أَنسَانِيهُ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ...

none but Satan made me forget to tell (you) about it:

C2410. The attendant actually saw the fish swimming away in the sea, and yet "forgot" to tell his master. In his case the "forgetting" was more than forgetting. Inertia had made him refrain from telling the important news. In such matters inertia is almost as bad as active spite, the suggestion of Satan.

... وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا (٦٣)

it took its course through the sea in a marvelous way!"

قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ...

64. Moses said: "That was what we were seeking after":

... فَارْتَدَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا (٦٤)

so they went back on their footsteps, following (the path they had come).

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِندِنَا...

65. So they found one of Our servants, on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves

C2411. One of Our servants: his name is not mentioned in the Quran, but Tradition gives it as Khidhr.

Round him have gathered a number of picturesque folk tales, with which we are not here concerned.

"Khidhr" means "Green": his knowledge is fresh and green, and drawn out of the living sources of life for it is drawn from Allah's own Knowledge. He is a mysterious being, who has to be sought out. He has the secrets of some of the paradoxes of Life, which ordinary people do not understand, or understand in a wrong sense, as we shall see further on.

The nearest equivalent figure in the literature of the People of the Book is Melchizedek or Melchisedek (the Greek form in the New Testament). In Gen. 14:18-20, he appears as king of Salem, priest of the Most High God: he blesses Abraham, and Abraham gives him tithes.

St. Paul allegorizes him in his Epistle to the Hebrew (5:6-10, 7:1-10):

> "he was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life".

That is to say, he appeared mysteriously: neither his parentage nor his pedigree is known, and he seems to live all time.

These qualities are also attributed to Khidhr in popular Muslim tradition.

... وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِن لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا (٦٥)

and whom We had taught knowledge from Our own presence.

C2412. Khidhr had two special gifts from Allah:

- Mercy from Him, and
- Knowledge from Him too.

The first freed him from the ordinary incidents of daily human life; and the second entitled him to interpret the inner meaning and mystery of events, as we shall see further on.

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى...

66. Moses said to him:

... هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَى أَن تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا (٦٦)

"May I follow thee, on the footing that thou teach me something of the (Higher) Truth which thou hast been taught?"

C2413. Moses, not understanding the full import of what he was asking, makes a simple request. He wants to learn something of the special Knowledge which Allah had bestowed on Khidhr.

قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (٦٧)

67. (The other) said:

"Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me!

C2414. Khidhr smiles, and says that there will be many things which Moses will see with him, which Moses will not completely understand and which will make Moses impatient.

The highest knowledge often seems paradoxical to those who have not the key to it.

وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَى مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا (٦٨)

68. "And how canst thou have patience about things about which thy understanding is not complete?"

C2415. Khidhr does not blame Moses.

Each one of us can only follow our own imperfect lights to the best of our judgment, but if we have Faith, we are saved many false steps.

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا ...

69. Moses said:

"Thou wilt find me, if Allah so will, (truly) patient:

... وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا (٦٩)

nor shall I disobey thee in aught."

C2416. Moses has Faith. He adopts the true attitude of the learner to the Teacher, and promises to obey in all things, with the help of Allah.

The Teacher is doubtful, but permits him to follow him on condition that he asks no questions about anything until the Teacher himself mentions it first.

قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَن شَيْءٍ حَتَّى أُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا (٧٠)

70. The other said:

"If then thou wouldst follow me, ask me no questions about anything until I myself speak to thee concerning it."

Section 10

فَانطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا...

71. So they both proceeded: until, when they were in the boat,

he scuttled it.

C2417. The explanation follows in 18:79.

... قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا ...

Said Moses:

"Hast thou scuttled it in order to drown those in it?

... لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا (٧١)

Truly a strange thing hast thou done!"

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (٧٢)

72. He answered: "Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?"

قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا (٧٣)

73. Moses said: "Rebuke me not for forgetting, nor grieve me by raising difficulties in my case."

فَانطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ...

74. Then they proceeded: until, when they met a young man, he slew him.

C2418. The explanation follows in 18:80-81.

... قَالَ أَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ...

Moses said:

"Hast thou slain an innocent person who had slain none?

... لَّقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُّكْرًا (٧٤)

Truly a foul (unheard-of) thing hast thou done!"

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكَ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا (٧٥)

75. He answered: "Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?"

قَالَ إِن سَأَلْتُكَ عَن شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَاحِبْنِي...

76. (Moses) said:

"If ever I ask thee about anything after this, keep me not in thy company:

... قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِن لَّدُنِّي عُذْرًا (٧٦)

then wouldst thou have received (full) excuse from my side."

فَانطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا أَتَيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ...

77. Then they proceeded: until, when they came to the inhabitants of a town,

... اسْتَطْعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَن يُضَيِّفُوهُمَا...

they asked them for food, but they refused them hospitality.

C2419. The inhabitants were churlish. They broke the universal Eastern rule of hospitality to strangers, and thus showed themselves beyond the pale of ordinary human courtesies.

Note that they would have been expected to offer hospitality of themselves, unasked. Here Moses and his companion actually had to ask for hospitality and were refused point-blank.

... فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنقَضَّ فَأَقَامَهُ...

They found there a wall on the point of falling down, but he set it up straight.

... قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَاتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا (٧٧)

(Moses) said: "If thou hadst wished, surely thou couldst have exacted some recompense for it!"

C2420. As they were refused hospitality, they should, as self-respecting men, have shaken the dust of the town off their feet, or shown their indignation in some way. Instead of that, Khidhr actually goes and does a benevolent act.

He rebuilds for them a falling wall, and never asks for any compensation for it. Perhaps he employed local workmen for it and paid them wages, thus actually benefiting a town which had treated him and his companion so shabbily!

Moses is naturally surprised and asks, "Could you not at least have asked for the cost?"

قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ...

78. He answered:

"This is the parting between me and thee:

... سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِع عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (٧٨)

now will I tell thee the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience.

C2421. The story and the interpretation are given with the greatest economy of words. It would repay us to search for the meaning in terms of our own inner and outer experience.

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ...

79. As for the boat, it belonged to certain men in dire want: they plied on the water:

... فَأَرَدتُّ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءهُم مَّلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا (٧٩)

I but wished to render it unserviceable, for there was after them a certain king who seized on every boat by force.

C2422. They went on the boat, which was plying for hire. Its owners were not even ordinary men who plied for trade. They had been reduced to great poverty, perhaps from affluent circumstances, and deserved great commiseration, the more so as they preferred an honest calling to begging for charity.

They did not know, but Khidhr did, that that boat, perhaps a new one, had been marked down to be commandeered by an unjust king who seized on every boat he could get-it may have been, for warlike purposes. If this boat had been taken away from these self-respecting men, they would have been reduced to beggary, with no resources left them.

By a simple act of making it unseaworthy, the boat was saved from seizure. The owners could repair it as soon as the danger was past.

Khidhr probably paid liberally in fares, and what seemed an unaccountably cruel act was the greatest act of kindness he could do in the circumstances.

وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ...

80. "As for the youth, his parents were people of Faith,

... فَخَشِينَا أَن يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا (٨٠)

and we feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude (to Allah and man).

C2423. This seemed at first sight even a more cruel act than scuttling the boat. But the danger was also greater.

Khidhr knew that the youth was a potential parricide. His parents were worthy, pious people, who had brought him up with love.

He had apparently gone wrong. Perhaps he had already been guilty of murders and robberies and had escaped the law by subtleties and fraud. See next note.

فَأَرَدْنَا أَن يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا (٨١)

81. "So we desired that their Lord would give them in exchange (a son) better in purity (of conduct) and closer in affection.

C2424. The son was practically an outlaw, -a danger to the public and a particular source of grief to his righteous parents.

Even so, his summary capital punishment would have been unjustified if Khidhr had been acting on his own. But Khidhr was not acting on his own: see the latter part of the next verse.

The plural "we" also implies that he was not acting on his own. He was acting on higher authority and removing a public scourge, who was also a source of extreme sorrow and humiliation to his parents.

His parents are promised a better-behaved son who would love them and be a credit to them.

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ...

82. "As for the wall, it belonged to two youths, orphans, in the Town;

... وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا...

there was, beneath it, a buried treasure, to which they were entitled:

their father had been a righteous man:

C2425. The wall was in a ruinous state. If it had fallen, the treasure buried beneath it would have been exposed and would certainly have been looted, among so churlish and selfish a people.

See n. 2419 above.

The treasure had been collected and buried by a righteous man. It was not, in any sense of the word, ill-gotten gains; it was buried expressly in the interests of the orphans by their father before his death. It was intended that the orphans should grow up and safely take possession of their heritage. It was also expected that they would be righteous men like their father, and

use the treasure in good works and in advancing righteousness among an otherwise wicked community.

There was thus both public and private interests involved in all the three incidents. In the second incident Khidhr uses the word "we", showing that he was associating in his act the public authorities of the place, who had been eluded by the outlaw.

... فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ...

so thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure -- a mercy (and favor) from thy Lord.

C2426. Age of full strength: Cf. 17:34 and n. 2218.

... وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي...

I did it not of my own accord.

C2427. Those who act, not from a whim or a private impulse of their own, but from higher authority, have to bear the blame, for acts of the greatest wisdom and utility.

... ذَٰلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِع عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا (٨٢)

Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience."

C.137 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(18:83-110)

Three episodes in the life of a great king
Dhu al Qarnayn illustrated how power
And opportunities should be used in the service
Of Allah; he punished the guilty indeed,
But was kind to the righteous; he left
Primitive people their freedom of life;
And he protected industrious people from grasping

Neighbors. But he relied upon Allah, and made them
Remember the Day of Judgement, when all
Will see the Truth and receive the Punishments
And Rewards earned in their present Life.

Section 11

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ...

83. They ask thee concerning Dhul al Qarnayn.

C2428. Literally, "the Two-horned one", the King with the Two Horns, or the Lord of the Two Epochs.

Who was he?

In what age, and where did he live?

The Quran gives us no material on which we can base a positive answer. Nor is it necessary to find an answer, as the story is treated as a Parable.

Popular opinion identifies Dhul al Qarnayn with Alexander the Great.

An alternative suggestion is an ancient Persian king, or a pre-historic Himyarite King.

Dhul al Qarnayn was a most powerful king, but it was Allah, Who, in His universal Plan, gave him power and provided him with the ways and means for his great work.

His sway extended over East and West, and over people of diverse civilisations. He was just and righteous, not selfish or grasping. He protected the weak and punished the unlawful and the turbulent.

Three of his expeditions are described in the text, each embodying a great ethical idea involved in the possession of kingship or power.

... قُلْ سَأَتْلُو عَلَيْكُم مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا (٨٣)

Say, "I will rehearse to you something of his story."

إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا (٨٤)

84. Verily We established his power on earth, and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends.

C2429. Great was his power and great were his opportunities ("ways and means"), which he used for justice and righteousness.

But he recognised that his power and opportunities were given to him as a trust by Allah. He had faith, and did not forget Allah.

فَأَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا (٨٥)

85. One (such) way he followed,

حَتَّى إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ...

86. Until, when he reached the setting of the **sun**, He found it set in a spring of murky water:

C2430. This is the first of the three episodes here mentioned, his expedition to the west. "Reaching the setting of the sun" does not mean the extreme west, for there is no such thing. West and East are relative terms.

It means a western expedition terminated by a "spring of murky water." This has puzzled Commentators, and they have understood this to mean the dark, tempestuous sea.

If Dhul al Qarnayn is Alexander the Great, the reference is easily understood to be to Lychnitis (now Ochrida), west of Macedonia. It is fed entirely by underground springs in a limestone region, where the water is never very clear.

... وَوَجَدَ عِندَهَا قَوْمًا...

near it he found a People:

... قُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِمَّا أَن تُعَذِّبَ وَإِمَّا أَن تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا (٨٦)

We said: "O Dhul al Qarnayn! (thou hast authority), either to punish them, or to treat them with kindness."

C2431. He had great power and a great opportunity. He got authority over a turbulent and unruly people. Was he going to be severe with them and chastise them, or was he going to seek peace at any price, i.e., to wink at violence and injustice so long as it did not affect his power?

He chose the better course, as described in the next verse. To protect the weak and the innocent, he punished the guilty and the headstrong, but he remembered always that the true Punishment would come in the Hereafter-the true and final justice before the throne of Allah.

قَالَ أَمَّا مَن ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُ...

87. He said:

"Whoever doth wrong, him shall we punish;

... ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَى رَبِّهِ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا (٨٧)

then shall he be sent back to his Lord; and He will punish him with a punishment unheard-of (before).

C2432. Though most powerful among kings, he remembered that his power was but human, and given by Allah. His punishments were but tentative, to preserve the balance of this life as he could appraise it.

Even if his punishment was capital ("wrong doer sent back to his Lord") it was nothing compared to the dire consequences of sin, in the final Justice of Allah.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاء الْحُسْنَى...

88. "But whoever believes, and works righteousness -- he shall have a goodly reward,

... وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا (٨٨)

and easy will be his task as we order it by our command."

C2433. He never said like Pharaoh. "I am your Lord Most High!" (79:24).

On the contrary his punishments were humbly regulated as not being final, and he laid more stress on the good

he could do to those who lived normal lives in faith and righteousness.

His rule was easy to them: he imposed no heavy tasks because of his power, but gave every opportunity to rich and poor for the exercise of virtue and goodness. Such is the spiritual lesson to be learned from the first episode.

ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا (٨٩)

89. Then followed he (another) way.

حَتَّى إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ...

90. Until, when he came to the rising of the sun,

C2434. We now come to the second episode.

This is an expedition to the east. "Rising of the sun" has a meaning corresponding to "setting of the sun" in 18:86, as explained in n. 2430.

... وَجَدَهَا تَطْلُعُ عَلَى قَوْمٍ لَّمْ نَجْعَل لَّهُم مِّن دُونِهَا سِتْرًا (٩٠)

he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection against the sun.

C2435. The people here lived very simple lives. Perhaps the climate was hot, and they required neither roofs over their heads, nor much clothing to protect them from the sun.

What did he do with them?

See next note.

كَذَٰلِكَ وَقَدْ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا (٩١)

91. (He left them) as they were:

We completely understood what was before him.

C2436. They were a primitive people. He did not fuss over their primitiveness, but left them in the enjoyment of peace and tranquility in their own way.

In this he was wise. Power is apt to be intolerant and arrogant, and to interfere in everything that does not accord with its own glorification. Not so Dhul al Qarnayn.

He recognised his own limitations in the sight of Allah: man never completely understands his own position, but if he devoutly looks to Allah, he will live and let live. This is the spiritual lesson from the second episode.

ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا (٩٢)

92. Then followed he (another) way

حَتَّى إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ...

93. Until, when he reached (a tract) between two mountains,

C2437. Cf. 21:96.

... وَجَدَ مِن دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَّا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا (٩٣)

he found, beneath, them a people who scarcely understood a word.

C2438. It does not mean that they had no speech. It means that they did not understand the speech of the Conqueror. But they had parleys with him (through interpreters), as is evident from the verses following (18:94-98).

قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

94. They said:

"O Dhu al Qarnayn! the Gog and Magog (people) do great mischief on earth:

C2439. What we are mainly concerned with is its interpretation.

The Conqueror had now arrived among a people who were different in speech and race from him, but not quite primitive, for they were skilled in the working of metals, and could furnish blocks (or bricks) of iron, melt metals with bellows or blow-pipes, and prepare molten lead (18:96).

Apparently they were a peaceable and industrious race, much subject to incursions from wild tribes who are called Gog and Magog. Against these tribes they were willing to purchase immunity by paying the Conqueror tribute in return for protection. The permanent protection they wanted was the closing of a mountain gap through which the incursions were made.

... فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَى أَن تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا (٩٤)

shall we then render thee tribute in order that thou mightest erect a barrier between us and them?"

... قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ

95. He said:

"(The power) in which my Lord has established me is better (than tribute):

C2440. Dhul al Qarnayn was not greedy and did not want to impose a tribute to be carried away from an industrious population. He understood the power which Allah had given him, to involve duties and responsibilities on his part -the duty of protecting his subjects without imposing too heavy a taxation on them.

... فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ ...

help me therefore with strength (and labor):

He would provide the motive force and organizing skill. Would they obey him and provide the material and labour, so that they could close the gap with a strong barrier, probably with well-secured gates?

... أَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا (٩٥)

I will erect a strong barrier between you and them:

The word **radm**, translated "Barrier," does not necessarily mean a wall, but rather suggests a blocked door or entrance.

... آتُونِي زُبَرَ الْحَدِيدِ

96. "Bring me blocks of iron."

C2441. I understand the defences erected to have been a strong barrier of iron, with iron Gates. The jambs of the Gates were constituted with blocks or bricks of iron, and the interstices filled up with molten lead, so as to form an impregnable mass of metal.

It may be that there was a stone wall also, but that is not mentioned. There was none in the Iron Gate near Bukhara.

... حَتَّى إِذَا سَاوَى بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انفُخُوا...

At length, when he had filled up the space between the two steep mountain sides, he said,

"Blow (with your bellows)."

... حَتَّى إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ ...

Then, when he had made it (red) as fire, he said:

C2442. Made it (red) as fire. what does **"it"** refer to?

Probably to the iron, either in sheets or blocks, to be welded with the molten lead.

... آتُونِي أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قِطْرًا (٩٦)

"Bring me, that I may pour over it, molten lead."

فَمَا اسْطَاعُوا أَن يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا (٩٧)

97. Thus were they made powerless to scale it or to dig through it.

C2443. The iron wall and gates and towers were sufficiently high to prevent their being scaled and sufficiently strong with welded metal to resist any attempt to dig through them.

قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّي...

98. He said:

"This is a mercy from my Lord:

C2444. After all the effort which Dhul al Qarnayn has made for their protection, he claims no credit for himself beyond that of discharging his duty as a ruler. He turns

their attention to Allah, Who has provided the ways and means by which they can be helped and protected.

But all such human precautions are apt to become futile. The time must come when they will crumble into dust. Allah has said so in His Revelation; and His word is true.

And so the lesson from the third episode is:

Take human precautions and do all in your power to protect yourselves from evil. But no protection is complete unless you seek the help and grace of Allah. The best of our precautions must crumble to dust when the appointed Day arrives.

... فَإِذَا جَاء وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاء...

but when the promise of my comes to pass, He will make it into dust;

... وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا (٩٨)

and the promise of my Lord is true."

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ...

99. On that day We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another;

C2445. And so we pass on to the Last Days before the Great Summons comes from Allah. All human barriers will be swept away. There will be tumultuous rushes. The Trumpet will be blown, and the Judgment will be set on foot.

... وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّور فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا (٩٩)

the trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them all together.

وَعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ عَرْضًا (١٠٠)

100. And We shall present Hell that day for Unbelievers to see, all spread out --

C2446. If men had scoffed at Faith and the Hereafter, their eyes will be opened now, and they will see the terrible Reality.

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي...

101. (Unbelievers) whose eyes had been under a veil from Remembrance of Me,

... وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا (١٠١)

and who had been unable even to hear.

C2447. Those very men who refused to see the many Signs of Allah which in this world convey His Message and to hear the Word of the Lord when it came to them, will then see without any mistake the consequences fully brought up before them.

Section 12

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِن دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ...

102. Do the Unbelievers think that they can take my servants as protectors besides Me?

... إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلًا (١٠٢)

Verily We have prepared Hell for the Unbelievers for (their) entertainment.

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا (١٠٣)

103. Say:

"Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds? --

C2448. That is, those who prided themselves on their works in this life, and now find that those works are of no avail. Their loss is all the greater because they had a misplaced confidence in their own deeds or in the assistance of false "protectors".

Allah is the only Protector: no one else's protection is of any use.

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا (١٠٤)

104. "Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works?"

C2449. Many people have such a smug sense of self-righteousness that while they go on doing wrong, they think that they are acquiring merit.

So, in charity, all the elements that make for outward show or selfishness (as to get some worldly advantage) nullify the deed of charity.

In the same way hypocrites sometimes affect to be surprised that their declared effort for somebody's good is not appreciated, when they are really seeking some hidden gain or false glory for themselves.

The sincere are only those who believe in their spiritual responsibility and act as in Allah's sight.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ...

105. They are those who deny the Signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter):

vain will be their works,

... فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا (١٠٥)

nor shall We, on the Day of Judgment, give them any Weight.

C2450. What weight can be attached to works behind which the motives are not pure, or are positively evil?

They are either wasted or count against those who seek to pass them off as meritorious!

ذَلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوًا (١٠٦)

106. That is their reward, Hell; because they rejected Faith, and took My Signs and My Messengers by way of jest.

C2451. False motives, pretence, deception, and hypocrisy, flourish because people do not take the higher life seriously. In effect they treat it as a jest. Signs and Messengers are sent as a special and personal Mercy from Allah, and for such things the first person singular is used as in this verse, even when it involves a sudden transition from the first person plural as in the last verse.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا (١٠٧)

107. As to those who believe and work righteous deeds, they have, for their entertainment, the Gardens of Paradise,

C2452. Firdaus in Persian means an enclosed place, a park.

In technical theological language the word is used for the inner circle of Heaven, or the highest Heaven, the destination of those who perfectly fulfil both requirements, viz.; a sound faith, and perfectly righteous conduct. Small faults in either respect are forgiven; the Mercy of Allah steps in.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا (١٠٨)

108. Wherein they shall dwell (for aye):

no change will they wish for from them.

قُل لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي...

109. Say:

"If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write out) the words of my Lord,

... لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَن تَنفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي...

sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord,

C2453. The Words and Signs and Mercies of Allah are in all Creation, and can never be fully set out in human language, however extended our means may be imagined to be.

... وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا (١٠٩)

even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid."

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَى إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

110. Say:

"I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your Allah is one Allah:

فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاء رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا...

whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness,

... وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا (١١٠)

and in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner."

C2454. Righteousness and true respect for Allah; which excludes the worship of anything else,

- whether idols, or deified men,
- or forces of nature,
- or faculties of man,
- or Self-these are the criteria of true worship.





And I have never been unblest in my invocation to You, O my Lord!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Maryam

مَرْيَم

Introduction and Summary

The spiritual growth of man as an individual soul having been explained in Surah 17 as beginning with the first principles of moral conduct and in Surah 18 as being dependent upon our realization of the brevity and mystery of this life and the true use of power as in the story of Dhul al Qarnayn, we now pass on the story of individual Messengers of Allah in their personal relations with their environment:

- Yahya with his father Zakariya,

- Jesus with his mother Mary:
- Abraham with his unbelieving father,
- Moses with his brother Aaron,
- Ismail with his family,
- and Idris in the high station to which he was called.

Seeing how these great ones fitted into the scheme of life, man is condemned for his want of faith, or for degrading his faith to superstition, and warned of the Hereafter.

In chronology, it was revealed before the first resort of the batch of Muslims to Abyssinia, say seven years before Hijrah.

Summery- Zakariya was anxious to have an heir to carry on Allah's work in a world of unrighteousness, and Yahya was given to him (19:1-15, and C. 138).

Mary the mother of Jesus was maligned by her people, but Jesus comforted her and was good to her (19:16-40, and C. 139).

Abraham was persecuted for his Faith by his people, including his unbelieving father, but he withdrew from them, and was blessed: Moses was helped by his brother Aaron, Ismail brought up his family in piety: and Idris was truthful and pious in a high station: they showed the way: yet men will not learn the good of life (19:41-65, and C. 140).

Man should not disbelieve in the Hereafter, nor sully his faith by false notions about Allah (19:66-98, and C. 141).

C.138 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(19:1-15)

Men of God show their qualities
In their private relationships as much

As in their public ministry. Zakariya
Was anxious, in a world of unrighteousness.
To find a successor to continue his godly
Errand. He was given a son, Yahya,
Who heralded Jesus, and lived a life
Of wisdom, gentle love, and purity.



كٓهيعٓصٓ (١)

1. Kaf Ha Ya 'Ayn Sad.

C2455. This is the only Surah which begins with these five Abbreviated Letters, Kaf Ha Ya 'Ayn Sad.

For Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix 1.

As stated in my note 25, such Letters are Symbols of which the true meaning is known to Allah alone. We should not be dogmatic about any conjectures that we make.

According to the interpretation of the last letter Sad, suggested in n. 989 to 7:1, I should be disposed to accept *Sad* with the meaning of Qasas, i.e. stories of the Prophets.

The main figures referred to here are:

- Zakariya,
- Yahya,
- Maryam,
- 'Isa, and
- Ibrahim:

the others are mentioned but incidentally.

The strong letter

- in Za**K**ariya is **K**;

- in IbraHim, **H**;
- in YahYa and perhaps MarYam, **Y**; and
- in ʿIsa – **ʿA** (ʿAyn).
- **H** also comes in **H**arun (Aaron), and
- the Arabic **Ya'** comes in all the names including Ismail and Idris.

I offer this suggestion with some difference.

The suggestion of the Tafsir Kabir is that the letters stand for attributes of Allah;

- **K** for Kafi (the One sufficient in Himself);
- **H** for Hadi (He who guides);
- **Y** for Yad (Hand as symbol of Power and Authority;

  Cf. 48:10.

  "The Hand of Allah is above their hands");
- **ʿA** for Alim (the All Knowing); and
- **S** for Sadiq (The True One).

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا (٢)

2. (This is) a recital of the Mercy of thy Lord to His Servant Zakariya.

C2456. The Mercy of Allah to Zakariya was shown in many ways:

- in the acceptance of his prayer;
- in bestowing a son like Yahya; and
- in the love between father and son, in addition to the work which Yahya did as Allah's Messenger for the world.

Cf. 3:38-41 and notes. There the public ministry was the point stressed; here the beautiful relations between the son and the father.

إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ نِدَاء خَفِيًّا (٣)

3. Behold! he cried to his Lord in secret,

C2457. In secret: because he feared that his own family and relatives were going wrong (19:5), and he wanted to keep the lamp of Allah burning bright. He could not very well mention the fear about his colleagues (who were his relations) in public.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا...

4. Praying:

"O my Lord! infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head doth glisten with grey:

...وَلَمْ أَكُن بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا (٤)

but never am I unblest, O my Lord, in my prayer to Thee!

C2458. This preface shows the fervent faith of Zakariya. Zakariya was a prophet of the Most High Allah. His office was in the Temple, and his relatives were his colleagues. But he found in them no true spirit of the service of Allah and man. He was filled with anxiety as to who would uphold the godly ideas he had in mind, which were strange to his worldly colleagues.

وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِن وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا...

5. "Now I fear (what) my relatives (and colleagues) (will do) after me:

but my wife is barren:

...فَهَبْ لِي مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا (٥)

so give me an heir as from Thyself --

C2459. His was not merely a desire for a son. If it had been, he would have prayed much earlier in his life, when he was a young man. He was too full of true piety

to put merely selfish things into his prayers. But here was a public need, in the service of the Lord.

He was too old, but could he perhaps adopt a child - who would be an heir "as from Allah?" (See n. 380 to 3:38).

يَرِثُنِي وَيَرِثُ مِنْ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ ...

6. "(One that) will (truly) represent me, and represent the posterity of Jacob;

C2460. It is true that an heir inherits property, but his higher duty is to represent in everything the personality of him from whom he inherits.

It is doubtful whether Zakariya had any worldly property. But he had character and virtue, as a man of God, and this he wanted to transmit to his heir as his most precious possession. It was almost the most precious possession of the posterity of Jacob. The people around him had fallen away from Allah's Message. Could his heir, like him, try and renew it?

وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا (٦) ...

and make him, O my Lord! one with whom Thou art well-pleased!"

يَا زَكَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَى...

7. (His prayer was answered):

"O Zakariya! We give thee good news of a son: his name shall be Yahya:

لَمْ نَجْعَل لَّهُ مِن قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا (٧)...

on none by that name have We conferred distinction before."

C2461. This was John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus.

In accordance with his father's prayer he, and Jesus for whom he prepared the way, renewed the Message of Allah, which had been corrupted and lost among the Israelites.

The Arabic form Yahya suggests "Life".

The Hebrew form is Johanan, which means "Jehovah has been Gracious". Cf. Hananan in verse 13 below.

It does not mean that the name was given for the first time, for we read of a Johanan the son of Careah in 4 Kings, 25:23, an otherwise obscure man.

It means that Allah had, for the first time, called one of His elect by that name.

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا...

8. He said:

"O my Lord! how shall I have a son, when my wife is barren

...وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا (٨)

and I have grown quite decrepit from old age?"

... قَالَ كَذَٰلِكَ

9. He said: "So (it will be):

C2462. Who is the **"He"** in this clause?

As I have construed it, following the majority of Commentators, it means the angel who brought the message from Allah.

Cf. 19:21 below.

But some Commentators construe it to refer to Zakariya. In that case the meaning will be:

> Zakariya after a little reflection said (in his wonder) "So!", i.e., "Can it really be so?
>
> Can I really have a son in my old age?"
>
> The speech following." Thy Lord saith," etc., will then be that of the angel-messenger.

... قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ...

thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for Me:

...وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِن قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا (٩)

I did indeed create thee before, when thou hadst been nothing!' "

C2463. Every man was nothing just before he was created, i.e., his personality was called into being by Allah. Even if there are material processes in forming the body, in accordance with the laws of nature, the real creative force is the power of Allah.

But here there is a subtler meaning. John was the harbinger of Jesus, preparing the way for him; and this sentence also prepares us for the more wonderful birth of Jesus himself, see verse 21 below.

Everything is possible with Allah.

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَل لِّي آيَةً...

10. (Zakariya) said "O my Lord! give me a Sign."

C2464. The **"Sign"**, was in order to convince Zakariya that the Lord's promise was true, for he had faith; but it was a symbol by which he was to show in his conduct that he was to conform to his new destiny as the father of Yahya who was to come.

Yahya was to take up the work, and Zakariya was to be silent, although the latter was sound in body and there was nothing to prevent him from speaking.

...قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا (١٠)

"Thy Sign," was the answer, "shall be that thou shalt speak to no man for three nights, although thou art not dumb."

C2465. Compare this verse with 3:41.

The variations are interesting. Here it is "for three nights": there it is "for three days".

The meaning is the same, for a day is a period of 24 hours. But the point of view is different in each case.

- There it was from the point of view of the Ummah or Congregation, among whom he worked by day;
- here the point of view is that of his individual soul, which spent the nights in prayer and praise.

Notice again that at the end of the next verse, we have here, "In the morning and the evening", and at the end

of 3:41, "In the evening and in the morning" - showing again that the point of view is reversed.

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ أَن سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً

وَعَشِيًّا (١١)

11. So Zakariya came out to his people from his chamber: he told them by signs to celebrate Allah's praises in the morning and in the evening.

يَا يَحْيَى خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ...

12. (To his son came the command):

"O Yahya! take hold of the Book with might":

C2466. Time passes. The son is born. In this section of the Surah the centre of interest is Yahya, and the instruction is now given to him.

'Keep fast hold of Allah's revelation with all your might':

for an unbelieving world had either corrupted or neglected it, and Yahya (John the Baptist) was to prepare the way for, Jesus, who was coming to renew and re-interpret it.

وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا (١٢)...

and We gave him wisdom even as a youth.

C2467. Hukm, translated Wisdom, implies something more than Wisdom;

it is the Wisdom or Judgment that is entitled to judge and command, as in the matter of denouncing sin.

وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا (١٣)

13. And pity (for all creatures) as from Us, and purity: he was devout,

C2468. John the Baptist did not live long. He was imprisoned by Herod, the tetrarch (provincial ruler under the Roman Empire), whom he had reproved for his sins, and eventually beheaded at the instigation of the woman

with whom Herod was infatuated. But even in his young life, he was granted,

- wisdom by Allah, for he boldly denounced sin;
- gentle pity and love for all Allah's creatures, for he moved among the humble and lowly, and despised "soft raiment";
- and purity of life, for he renounced the world and lived in the wilderness.

All his work he did in his youth. These things showed themselves in his conduct, for he was devout, showing love to Allah and to Allah's creatures, and more particularly to his parents (for we are considering that aspect of his life): this was also shown by the fact that he never used violence, from an attitude of arrogance, nor entertained a spirit of rebellion against divine Law. (R).

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُن جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا (١٤)

14. And kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious.

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا (١٥)

15. So Peace on him the day he was born, the day that he dies, and the day that he will be raised up to life (again)!

C2469. This is spoken as in the life-time of Yahya. Peace and Allah's Blessings, were on him when he was born; they continue when he is about to die an unjust death at the hands of a tyrant; and they will be specially manifest at the Day of Judgment.

C.139 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(19:16-40)

Next comes the story of Jesus and his mother
Mary. She gave birth, as a virgin, to Jesus
But her people slandered and abused her

As a disagree to her lineage. Her son
Did defend her and was kind to her. He
Was a servant of Allah, a true Prophet,
Blessed in the gifts of Prayer and Charity,
But no more than a man to call him
The son of Allah is to derogate from Allah's
Majesty, for Allah is High above all
His Creatures, the Judge of the Last Day.

Section 2

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ...

16. Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary,

C2470. Cf. the story of Mary as related in 3:42-51.

Here the whole theme is different:

it is the personal side of the experiences of the worshippers of Allah in relation to their families or environment.

...إِذِ انتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا (١٦)

when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East.

C2471. To a private eastern chamber, perhaps in the Temple. She went into privacy, from her people and from people in general, for prayer and devotion.

It was in this state of purity that the angel appeared to her in the shape of a man. She thought it was a man. She was frightened, and she adjured him not to invade her privacy.

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِن دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا...

17. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them:

...فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا (١٧)

then We sent to her Our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.

قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَٰنِ مِنكَ إِن كُنتَ تَقِيًّا (١٨)

18. She said: "I seek refuge from thee to (Allah) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah."

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا (١٩)

19. He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son."

C2472. Allah had destined her to be the mother of the Prophet Jesus Christ, and now had come the time when this should be announced to her.

قَالَتْ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا (٢٠)

20. She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"

قَالَ كَذَٰلِكِ...

21. He said: "So (it will be):

...قَالَ رَبُّكِ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ...

thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for Me:

...وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ آيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِّنَّا...

and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us':

C2473. The mission of Jesus is announced in two ways:

1. he was to be a Sign to men; his wonderful birth and wonderful life were to turn an ungodly world back to Allah; and
2. his mission was similar to that of all prophets of Allah.

But the point here is that the Israelites, to whom Jesus was sent, were a hardened race, for whom the message of Jesus was truly a gospel of Mercy.

...وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَّقْضِيًّا (٢١)

it is a matter (so) decreed."

C2474. For anything that Allah wishes to create, He says "Be", and it is (Cf. 3:47).

There is no interval between His decree and its accomplishment, except such as He imposes by His decree. Time may be only a projection of our own minds in this world of relativity.

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانتَبَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا (٢٢)

22. So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.

C2475. The annunciation and the conception, we may suppose, took place in Nazareth (of Galilee), say 65 miles north of Jerusalem.

The delivery took place in Bethlehem about 6 miles south of Jerusalem. It was a remote place, not only with reference to the distance of 71 miles, but because in Bethlehem itself the birth was in an obscure corner under a palm-tree, from which perhaps the babe was afterwards removed to a manger in a stable.

فَأَجَاءهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ...

23. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree:

...قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنتُ نَسْيًا مَّنسِيًّا (٢٣)

she cried (in her anguish): "Ah! would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"

C2476. She was but human, and suffered the pangs of an expectant mother, with no one to attend on her. The circumstances being peculiar, she had got far away from her people.

فَنَادَاهَا مِن تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا (٢٤)

24. But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-free):

"Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;

وَهُزِّي إِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطْ عَلَيْكِ رُطَبًا جَنِيًّا (٢٥)

25. "And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee.

C2477. Unseen Providence had seen that she should not suffer from thirst or from hunger. The rivulet provided her with water also for ablutions.

فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا...

26. "So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye.

C2478. Cool thine eye: An idiom for "comfort thyself and be glad".

The literal meaning should not, however, be lost sight of. She was to cool her eyes (perhaps full of tears) with the fresh water of the rivulet and take comfort that a remarkable babe had been born to her.

She was also to look around, and if any one came near, she was to decline all conversation. It was quite true: she was under a vow, and could not talk to any one.

فَإِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي...

And if thou dost see any man, say,

إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنسِيًّا (٢٦)...

'I have vowed a fast to (Allah) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being.' "

C2479. She was to decline all conversation with man or woman, on the plea of a vow to Allah.

The **"fast"** here does not mean abstinence literally from eating and drinking. She has just been advised to eat the dates and drink of the stream. It means abstinence from the ordinary household meals, and indeed from human intercourse generally.

فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ...

27. At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms).

قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا (٢٧)...

They said:

"O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!

C2480. The amazement of the people knew no bounds. In any case they were ready to think the worst of her, as she had disappeared from her kin for some time. But now she comes, shamelessly parading a babe in her arms! How she had disgraced the house of Aaron, the fountain of priesthood!

We may suppose that the scene took place in the Temple in Jerusalem, or in Nazareth.

يَا أُخْتَ هَارُونَ ...

28. "O sister of Aaron!

C2481. Aaron the brother of Moses was the first in the line of Israelite priesthood.

Mary and her cousin Elisabeth (mother of Yahya) came of a priestly family, and were therefore, "sisters of Aaron" or daughters of 'Imran (who was Aaron's father). See n. 375 to 3:35.

Mary is reminded of her high lineage and the unexceptionable morals of her father and mother. How, they said, she had fallen, and disgraced the name of her progenitors!

... مَا كَانَ أَبُوكِ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكِ بَغِيًّا (٢٨)

thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!"

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ...

29. But she pointed to the babe.

C2482. What could Mary do?

How could she explain?

Would they, in their censorious mood, accept her explanation?

All she could do was to point to the child, who, she knew, was no ordinary child. And the child came to her rescue. By a miracle he spoke, defended his mother, and preached-to an unbelieving audience.

See 3:46, and n. 388.

...قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَن كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا (٢٩)

They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?"

...قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ

30. He said:

"I am indeed a servant of Allah:

...آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا (٣٠)

He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet;

...وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُ

31. "And He hath made me Blessed wheresoever I be,

...وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا (٣١)

and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live;

C2483. There is a parallelism throughout the accounts of Jesus and Yahya, with some variations. Both the parallelisms and the variations are interesting.

For instance Jesus declares at the very outset that he is a servant of Allah, thus negativing the false notion that he was Allah or the son of Allah.

The greatness of Yahya is described in 19:12-13 in terms that are not applied to Jesus, but the verses 19:14-15 as applied to Yahya are in almost identical terms with those applied to Jesus here (19:32-33).

Devotion in Prayer and Charity is a good description of Christ at its best, and pity, purity, and devotion in Yahya are a good description of the ways leading to Prayer and Charity, just as John led to Jesus.

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا (٣٢)

32. "(He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable;

C2484. Overbearing violence is not only unjust and harmful to those on whom it is practised; it is perhaps even more harmful to the person who practices it, for his soul becomes turbid, unsettled, and ultimately unhappy

and wretched,-the state of those in Hell. Here the negative qualities are "not overbearing or miserable."

As applied to John they were "not overbearing or rebellious." John bore his punishment from the State without any protest or drawing back.

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدتُّ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا (٣٣)

33. "So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the Day that I shall be raised up to life (again)"!

C2485. Cf. 19:15, and n. 2469.

Christ was not crucified (4:157). (R).

ذَٰلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ...

34. Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary:

...قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ (٣٤)

(it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute.

C2486. The disputations about the nature of Jesus Christ were vain, but also persistent and sanguinary. The modem Christian churches have thrown them into the background, but they would do well to abandon irrational dogmas altogether.

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَن يَتَّخِذَ مِن وَلَدٍ سُبْحَانَهُ...

35. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son.

Glory be to Him!

...إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ (٣٥)

When He determines a matter, He only says to it,

"Be,"

and it is.

C2487. Begetting a son is a physical act depending on the needs of men's animal nature. Allah Most High is independent of all needs, and it is derogatory to Him to

attribute such an act to Him. It is merely a relic of pagan and anthropomorphic materialist superstitions.

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٣٦)

36. Verily, Allah is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a Way that is straight.

C2488. As opposed to the crooked superstitions which take refuge in all sorts of metaphysical sophistries to prove three in one and one in three. In the Quran there is no crookedness (18:1). Christ's teaching was simple, like his life, but the Christians have made it crooked.

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِن بَيْنِهِمْ...

37. But the sects differ among themselves:

...فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن مَّشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٣٧)

and woe to the Unbelievers because of the (coming) Judgment of a momentous Day!

C2489. Judgment. the word in the original is Mash-had, which implies many things:

- the time or place where evidence is taken, as in a Court of Judgment;
- the time or place where people are produced (to be judged); and
- the occasion for such production for the taking of evidence.

A very expressive phrase for the Day of Judgment.

أَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ وَأَبْصِرْ يَوْمَ يَأْتُونَنَا...

38. How plainly will they see and hear, the Day that they will appear before Us!

...لَكِنِ الظَّالِمُونَ الْيَوْمَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٨)

But the unjust today are in error manifest!

C2490. Cf. 50:22. and that whole passage, where the Resurrection is described.

وَأَنذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ...

39. But warn them of the Day of Distress, when the matter will be determined:

C2491. Hasrat: Sighs, sighing, regrets, distress.

...وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣٩)

for (behold), they are negligent and they do not believe!

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرِثُ الْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ عَلَيْهَا ...

40. It is We Who will inherit the earth, and all beings thereon:

C2492. Cf. 3:180. n. 485; 15:23, n. 1964,

Material property passes from one to another: when one dies, another inherits it. Allah gives life and death, and all that survives after physical death goes back to Allah, the original source of all things.

... وَإِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُونَ (٤٠)

to Us will they all be returned.

C.140 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(19:41-65)

Abraham pleaded with loving earnestness
With his father to accept the truth of Allah:
He was turned out, but he retained
His gentleness and was blessed. Moses
Asked for the aid of his brother Aaron
And was true to his people. Ismail
Was loyal to his father and his God, and was
A willing and accepted sacrifice to Allah.
Idris in his highest station held fast
To truth and integrity. Thus are the righteous

Shown true in their personal environment,
And inherit the Bliss in which the salutation
Is Peace-perfect Peace, the reward of the Constant

Section 3

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ...

41. Also mention in the Book (the story of) Abraham:

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَّبِيًّا (٤١)

he was a man of Truth, a prophet.

...إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ

42. Behold, he said to his father:

C2493. The reference to Abraham here is in relation to his tender solicitude for his father, who had not received the light of Unity, and to whom Abraham wanted to be a guide and friend.

...يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنكَ شَيْئًا (٤٢)

"O my father! why worship that which heareth not and seeth not, and can profit thee nothing?

...يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ

43. "O my father! to me hath come knowledge which hath not reached thee:

C2494. Some are more receptive of Light than others. It is their duty and privilege to guide and point to the right Way.

...فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا (٤٣)

so follow me:

I will guide thee to a Way that is even and straight.

C2495. Sawiyan: right, smooth, even; complete, perfect;

hence the derived meaning: in 19:10, in full possession of all the physical senses'; in that context, 'not dumb':

in 19:17, when the angel appears in the form of a man, 'completely like' a man, a man 'in all respects.'

يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ...

44. "O my father! serve not Satan:

...كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا (٤٤)

for Satan is a rebel against (Allah) Most Gracious.

C2496. The rebellion is all the more heinous and inexcusable, considering that Allah is Most Just, Most Merciful, Most Gracious.

يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَن يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ...

45. "O my father! I fear lest a Penalty afflict thee from (Allah) Most Gracious,

C2497. To entertain a feeling of friendliness, instead of aversion, to Evil, is in itself a degradation of our nature, a Penalty which Allah imposes on our deliberate rejection of the Truth. And the friendliness to Evil also implies the sharing of the outlawry of Evil.

...فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا (٤٥)

so that thou become to Satan a friend."

قَالَ أَرَاغِبٌ أَنتَ عَنْ آلِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ...

46. (The father) replied:

"Dost thou hate my gods, O Abraham?

...لَئِن لَّمْ تَنتَهِ لَأَرْجُمَنَّكَ...

If thou forbear not I will indeed stone thee:

...وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا (٤٦)

now get away from me for a good long while!"

C2498. Note the gentle persuasive tone of Abraham in his speeches in 19:42-45 (for we may suppose those sentences to sum up a long course of arguments) and in

19:47-48, contrasted with the brusque and repellent tone of the father's reply in this verse.

The one was the outcome of the true Light which had come to Abraham from Allah, as the other was the outcome of Pagan arrogance and the worship of brute force.

The spiritual lesson from this episode of Abraham's life may be stated in four propositions:

- the pious son is dutiful to his father and wishes him well in all things, material and spiritual,
- if the father refuses Allah's Light, the son will do his utmost to bring such Light to the father;
- having received the Light, the son will never renounce that Light, even if he has to forfeit his father's love and renounce his home;
- even if the father repels him and turns him out, his answer will be a soft answer, full of love and forgiveness on the one hand, but firmness on behalf of Truth on the other.

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ...

47. Abraham said:

"Peace be on thee: I will pray to my Lord for thy forgiveness:

C2499. Cf. 9:114. where this promise of Abraham to pray for his father is referred to, and its limitations pointed out.

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا (٤٧)

for He is to me Most Gracious.

وَأَعْتَزِلُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

48. "And I will turn away from you (all) and from those whom ye invoke besides Allah:

...وَأَدْعُو رَبِّي عَسَى أَلَّا أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شَقِيًّا (٤٨)

I will call on my Lord: Perhaps, by my prayer to my Lord, I shall be not unblest."

C2500. Abraham left his father and the home of his fathers (Ur of the Chaldees) and never returned.

He left because he was turned out, and because it was not possible for him to make any compromise with what was false in religion.

In return for abuse, he spoke gentle words. And he expressed his fervent hope that at least he (Abraham) would have Allah's blessing in reply to his prayers.

Here was a prefigurement of another Hijrah many centuries later! In both cases the prayer was abundantly fulfilled.

فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

49. When he had turned away from them and from those whom they worshipped besides Allah,

...وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا (٤٩)

We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob,

and each one of them We made a prophet.

C2501. Isaac and Isaac's son Jacob are mentioned here as carrying on one line of Abraham's traditions. The other line was carried on by Isma'il, who is mentioned independently five verses lower down, as his line got special honour in the Holy Prophet of Islam. That is why his mention comes after that of Moses.

Cf. 21:72.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُم مِّن رَّحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا (٥٠)

50. And We bestowed of Our Mercy on them,

and We granted them lofty honor on the tongue of truth.

C2502. Abraham and his son and grandson Isaac and Jacob, and their fine, maintained the banner of Allah's truth for many generations, and they won deservedly high praise-the praise of truth-on the tongues of men.

Abraham prayed that he should be praised by the tongue of truth among men to come in later ages: 26:84.

Ordinary praise may mean nothing: it may be due to selfish flattery on the part of others or artful management by the person praised. Praise on the tongue of sincere truth is praise indeed!

Section 4

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى...

51. Also mention in the Book (the story of) Moses:

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا (٥١)

for he was specially chosen, and he was a Messenger (and) a Prophet.

C2503. Moses was;

- especially chosen, and therefore prepared and instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, in order that he might free his people from Egyptian bondage; there may also be a reference to Moses' title of Kalim Allah, the one to whom Allah spoke without the intervention of angels: see 4:164, and n. 670;
- He was a prophet (nabi), in that he received inspiration; and
- he was a messenger (rasul) in that he had a Book of Revelation, and an Ummah or organized Community, for which he instituted laws. (R).

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِن جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا (٥٢)

52. And We called him from the right side of Mount (Sinai), and made him draw near to Us, for mystic (converse).

C2504. The incident here I think refers to the incidents described more fully in 20:9-36; a reference may also be made to Exod. 3:1-18 and 4:1-17.

The time is when Moses (with his family) was traveling and grazing the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, just before he got his commission from Allah. The place is somewhere near Mount Sinai (Jabal Musa).

Moses sees a Fire in the distance, but when he goes there, he hears a voice that tells him it is sacred ground. Allah asked him to put off his shoes and to draw near, and when he went near, great mysteries were revealed to him. He was given his commission, and his brother Aaron was given to him to go with him and aid him. It is after that, that he and Aaron went and faced Pharaoh in Egypt, as narrated in 7:103-144, etc.

The right side of the mountain may mean that Moses heard the voice from the right side of the mountain as he faced it; or it may have the figurative meaning of "right" in Arabic, i.e., the side which was blessed or sacred ground. (R).

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِن رَّحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا (٥٣)

53. And, out of Our Mercy, We gave him his brother Aaron, (also) a prophet.

C2505. Moses was diffident, and reluctant to go to Pharaoh as he had an impediment in his tongue, and he asked that his brother Aaron should be associated with him in his mission. Allah in His Mercy granted his request; 20:25-36.

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ...

54. Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma'il:

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا (٥٤)

He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was a Messenger (and) a Prophet.

C2506. Isma'il was Dhabih Allah i.e., the chosen sacrifice for Allah in Muslim tradition.

When Abraham told him of the sacrifice, he voluntarily offered himself for it, and never flinched from his promise, until the sacrifice was redeemed by the substitution of a ram under Allah's commands.

He was the fountain-head of the Arabian Ummah, and in his posterity came the Prophet of Allah. The Ummah and

the Book of Islam reflect back the prophethood on Isma'il.

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ...

55. He used to enjoin on his people Prayer and Charity,

...وَكَانَ عِندَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا (٥٥)

and he was most acceptable in the sight of his Lord.

C2507. An acceptable sacrifice: see last note.

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ...

56. Also mention in the Book the case of Idris:

C2508. Idris is mentioned twice in the Quran, viz.; here and in 21:85, where he is mentioned among those who patiently persevered.

His identification with the Biblical Enoch, who "'walked with God' (Gen. 5:21-24), may or may not be correct. Nor are we justified in interpreting verse 57 here as meaning the same thing as in Gen. 5:24 ("God took him"), that he was taken up without passing through the portals of death.

All we are told is that he was a man of truth and sincerity, and a prophet, and that he had a high position among his people. It is this point which brings him in the series of men just mentioned; he kept himself in touch with his people, and was honoured among them.

Spiritual progress need not cut us off from our people, for we have to help and guide them. He kept to truth and piety in the highest station.

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَّبِيًّا (٥٦)

he was a man of truth (and sincerity), (and) a prophet:

وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا (٥٧)

57. And We raised him to a lofty station.

أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ النَّبِيِّينَ...

58. Those were some of the prophets on whom Allah did bestow His Grace --

...مِن ذُرِّيَّةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ...

of the posterity of Adam, and of those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah,

...وَمِن ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْرَائِيلَ...

and of the posterity of Abraham and Israel --

C2509. The earlier generations are grouped into three epochs from a religious point of view:

- from Adam to Noah,
- from Noah to Abraham, and
- from Abraham to an indefinite time, say to the time when the Message of Allah was corrupted and the need arose for the final Messenger of Unity and Truth.

Israel is another name for Jacob.

...وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا...

of those whom We guided and chose;

...إِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا (٥٨)

whenever the Signs of (Allah) Most Gracious were rehearsed to them,

they would fall down in prostrate adoration and in tears.

C2510. The original is in the Aorist tense, implying that the "Posterity" alluded to includes not only the messengers but their worthy followers who are true to Allah and uphold His standard.

فَخَلَفَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوَاتِ...

59. But after them there followed a posterity who missed prayers and followed after lusts:

فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا (٥٩)...

soon, then, will they face Destruction --

C2511. This selfish godless posterity gains the upper hand at certain times, but even then there is always a minority who see the error of their ways, repent and believe, and live righteous lives.

They are not penalized in the Hereafter because they were associated with the ungodly in time. They reap the full reward of their faith and righteousness.

إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُوْلَئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ...

60. Except those who repent and believe, and work righteousness: for these will enter the Garden

وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا (٦٠)...

and will not be wronged in the least --

جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ عِبَادَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ...

61. Gardens of Eternity, those which (Allah) Most Gracious has promised to His servants in the Unseen:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًّا (٦١)...

for His promise must (necessarily) come to pass.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا إِلَّا سَلَامًا...

62. They will not there hear any vain discourse, but only salutations of peace:

C2512. Salam, translated "Peace", has a much wide signification. It includes;

- a sense of security and permanence, which is unknown in this life;
- soundness, freedom from defects, perfection as in the word salim;
- preservation, salvation, deliverance, as in the word sallama,
- salutation, accord with those around us;

- resignation, in the sense that we are satisfied and not discontented;
- besides the ordinary meaning of Peace, i.e., freedom from any jarring element. All these shades of meaning are implied in the word Islam. (R).

...وَلَهُمْ رِزْقُهُمْ فِيهَا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا (٦٢)

and they will have therein their sustenance, morning and evening.

C2513. Rizq: literally sustenance or means of subsistence, the term covers all the means of perfect satisfaction of body and soul.

Morning and evening, i.e., early and late, all the time, always. (R).

تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَن كَانَ تَقِيًّا (٦٣)

63. Such is the Garden which We give as an inheritance to those of Our Servants who guard against evil.

...وَمَا نَتَنَزَّلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ

64. (The angels say): "We descend not but by command of thy Lord:

C2514. We are apt to be impatient of the evils we see around us. We may give of our best service to Allah, and yet see no results. In our human short-sightedness we may complain within ourselves. But we must not be impatient.

The angels of Grace come not haphazard, but by command of Allah according to His Universal Will and Purpose. Allah does not forget. If things are delayed, it is in accordance with a wise providence, which cares for all. Our plain duty is to be patient and constant in His service. (R).

...لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ...

to Him belongeth what is before us, and what is behind us, and what is between:

...وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا (٦٤)

and thy Lord never doth forget" --

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

65. "Lord of the heavens and of the earth, and of all that is between them:

...فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ ...

so worship Him, and be constant and patient in His worship:

...هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا (٦٥)

knowest thou of any who is worthy of the same Name as He?"

C2515. The more we taste of the truth and mystery of life, the more do we realise that there is no one to be mentioned in the same breath as Allah.

He is above all names. But when we think of His beautiful qualities, and picture them to ourselves by names which give us some idea of Him, we can search the whole wide world of our imagination, and we shall not find another to be compared with Him in name or quality. He is the One: praise be to Him!

C.141 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(19:66-98)

Why should man disbelieve in the Hereafter?
We all must pass through the fire of temptation
But Allah Most Gracious will save us
If we accept Him and do right Sin
May have its respite, but must run
To its own destruction. We must not
Dishonour Allah by holding false
And monstrous ideas of Him. Glory
To Him that He cares for all His creatures.

Section 5

وَيَقُولُ الْإِنسَانُ أَئِذَا مَا مِتُّ لَسَوْفَ أُخْرَجُ حَيًّا (٦٦)

66. Man says: "What! when I am dead, shall I then be raised up alive?"

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكُ شَيْئًا (٦٧)

67. But does not man call to mind that We created him before out of nothing?

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ...

68. So, by thy Lord, without doubt, We shall gather them together, and (also) the Evil Ones (with them);

C2516. The disbelief in a future life is not merely a philosophic doubt, but a warped will, a disingenuous obstinacy in face of our inner spiritual instincts and experiences. We were nothing before. Cannot the same Allah, Who created us out of nothing also continue our personality?

But if we refuse to accept His light and guidance, our state will grow worse and worse. We shall be deprived of His grace. We shall be herded with Satan.

In utter humiliation we shall be faced with all the consequences of our refusal of Truth.

ثُمَّ لَنُحْضِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا (٦٨) ...

then shall We bring them forth on their knees round about Hell;

C2517. Round about Hell: There are many ways leading to evil, and people get to it from all round.

Hence the mention of the seven Gates to Hell: see 15:44. and n. 1977. (R).

ثُمَّ لَنَنزِعَنَّ مِن كُلِّ شِيعَةٍ أَيُّهُمْ أَشَدُّ عَلَى الرَّحْمَٰنِ عِتِيًّا (٦٩)

69. Then shall We certainly drag out from every sect all those who were worst in obstinate rebellion against (Allah) Most Gracious.

ثُمَّ لَنَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِينَ هُمْ أَوْلَى بِهَا صِلِيًّا (٧٠)

70. And certainly We know best those who are most worthy of being burned therein.

وَإِن مِّنكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا...

71. Not one of you but will pass over it:

C2518. Three interpretations are possible,

1. The general interpretation is that every person must pass through or by or over the Fire. Those who have had Taqwa (see. n. 26 to 2:2) will be saved by Allah's Mercy, while unrepentant sinners will suffer the torments in ignominy,
2. If we refer the pronoun "you" to those "in obstinate rebellion" in verse 69 above, both leaders and followers in sin, this verse only applies to the wicked,
3. Some refer this verse to the Bridge over Hell, the Bridge Sirat, over which all must pass to their final Destiny. This Bridge is not mentioned in the Quran. (R).

...كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَّقْضِيًّا (٧١)

this is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished.

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا وَّنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًّا (٧٢)

72. But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrongdoers therein, (humbled) to their knees.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

73. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, the Unbelievers say to those who believe,

...أَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا (٧٣)

"Which of the two sides is best in point of position?

Which makes the best show in council?"

C2519. The Unbelievers may, for a time, make a better show in worldly position, or in people's assemblages

where things are judged by the counting of heads. But Truth must prevail even in this world, and ultimately the positions must be reversed.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْنٍ هُمْ أَحْسَنُ أَثَاثًا وَرِئْيًا (٧٤)

74. But how many (countless) generations before them have We destroyed, who were even better in equipment and in glitter to the eye?

قُلْ مَن كَانَ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ مَدًّا...

75. Say:

"If any men go astray, (Allah) Most Gracious extends (the rope) to them.

...حَتَّى إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ إِمَّا الْعَذَابَ وَإِمَّا السَّاعَةَ...

Until, when they see the warning of Allah (being fulfilled) -- either in punishment or in (the approach of) the Hour --

C2520. Allah's warning is that every evil deed must have its punishment, and that there will be a Hereafter, the Day of Judgment, or the Hour, as it is frequently called.

The punishment of evil often begins in this very life. For instance, over-indulgence and excesses of all kinds bring on their Nemesis quite soon in this very life. But some subtler forms of selfishness and sin will be punished as every evil will be punished-in its own good time, as the Hour approaches.

In either case, the arrogant boasting sinners will realise that their taunt-who is best in position and in forces? (19:73)-is turned against themselves.

...فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضْعَفُ جُندًا (٧٥)

they will at length realize who is worst in position, and (who) weakest in forces!

...وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى...

76. "And Allah doth advance in guidance those who seek guidance;

...وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِندَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ مَّرَدًّا (٧٦)

and the things that endure. Good Deeds, are best in the sight of thy Lord, as rewards, and best in respect of (their) eventual returns."

C2521. These lines are the same as in 18:46 (second clause), (where see n. 2387), except that the word maradd (eventual returns) is here substituted for amal (hope).

The meaning is practically the same: but "hope" is more appropriate in the passage dealing generally with this world's goods, and "eventual returns" in the passage dealing with the sinner's specific investments and commitments in worldly position and organized cliques.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالَ لَأُوتَيَنَّ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا (٧٧)

77. Hast thou then seen the (sort of) man who rejects Our Signs, yet says: "I shall certainly be given wealth and children"?

C2522. Besides the man who boasts of wealth and power in actual possession, there is a type of man who boasts of getting them in the future and builds his worldly hopes thereon.

Is he sure?

He denies Allah, and His goodness and Mercy. But all good is in the hands of Allah.

Can such a man then bind Allah to bless him when he rejects faith in Allah?

Or does he pretend that he has penetrated to the mysteries of the future? For no man can tell what the future holds for him.

أَاطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبَ أَمِ اتَّخَذَ عِندَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ عَهْدًا (٧٨)

78. Has he penetrated to the Unseen, or has he taken a contract with (Allah) Most Gracious?

...كَلَّا

79. Nay!

سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُولُ وَنَمُدُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا (٧٩)...

We shall record what he says, and We Shall add and add to his punishment.

C2523. Such a man deserves double punishment,

- for rejecting Allah, and
- for his blasphemies with His Holy Name.

وَنَرِثُهُ مَا يَقُولُ وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا (٨٠)

80. To Us shall return all that he talks of, and he shall appear before Us bare and alone.

C2524. Literally, "We shall inherit", Cf. 19:40 and n. 2492.

Even if the man had property and power, it must go back to the Source of all things, and the man must appear before the Judgment-seat, alone and unaccompanied, stripped of all the things from which he expected so much!

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لِّيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا (٨١)

81. And they have taken (for worship) gods other than Allah, to give them power and glory!

C2525. 'Izz: exalted rank, glory, power, might, the ability to impose one's will or to carry out one's will.

كَلَّا سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا (٨٢)

82. Instead, they shall reject their worship, and become adversaries against them.

C2526. Cf. 10:28-30, where the idols deny that they knew anything of their worship, and leave their worshippers in the lurch;

and 5:119, where Jesus denies that he asked for worship, and leaves his false worshippers to the punishment of Allah.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تَؤُزُّهُمْ أَزًّا (٨٣)

83. Seest thou not that We have set the Evil Ones on against the Unbelievers, to incite them with fury?

C2527. Under the laws instituted by Allah, when evil reaches a certain stage of rebellion and defiance, it is left to gather momentum and to rush with fury to its own destruction. It is given a certain amount of respite, as a last chance: but failing repentance, its days are numbered.

The godly therefore should not worry themselves over the apparent worldly success of evil, but should get on with their own duties in a spirit of trust in Allah.

فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا (٨٤)

84. So make no haste against them, for We but count out to them a (limited) number (of days).

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفْدًا (٨٥)

85. The day We shall gather the righteous to (Allah) Most Gracious, like a band presented before a king for honors.

وَنَسُوقُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ وِرْدًا (٨٦)

86. And We shall drive the sinners to Hell, like thirsty cattle driven down to water --

C2528. Note the contrast between the saved and the doomed.

- The one march with dignity like honoured ones before a king,
- and the other rush in anguish to their punishment like a herd of cattle driven down by thirst to their watering place.

Note the metaphor of the water. They rush madly for water but are plunged into the Fire!

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ الشَّفَاعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِندَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ عَهْدًا (٨٧)

87. None shall have the power of intercession, but such a one as has received permission (or promise) from (Allah) Most Gracious.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَلَدًا (٨٨)

88. They say: "(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten a son!"

لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِدًّا (٨٩)

89. Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous!

C2529. The belief in Allah begetting a son is not a question merely of words or of speculative thought. It is a stupendous blasphemy against Allah. It lowers Allah to the level of an animal.

If combined with the doctrine of vicarious atonement, it amounts to a negation of Allah's justice and man's personal responsibility.

It is destructive of all moral and spiritual order, and is condemned in the strongest possible terms.

تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ...

90. At if the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder,

...وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا (٩٠)

and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin.

أَن دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ وَلَدًا (٩١)

91. That they should invoke a son for (Allah) Most Gracious.

وَمَا يَنبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ أَن يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا (٩٢)

92. For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son.

C2530. This basic principle was laid down early in the argument (19:35).

It was illustrated by a reference to the personal history of many messengers, including Jesus himself, who

behaved justly as men to their kith and kin and humbly served Allah.

The evil results of such superstitions were pointed out in the case of many previous generations which went to their ruin by dishonouring Allah.

And the argument is now rounded off towards the close of the Surah.

إِن كُلُّ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَٰنِ عَبْدًا (٩٣)

93. Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (Allah) Most Gracious as a servant.

لَّقَدْ أَحْصَاهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا (٩٤)

94. He does take and account of them (all), and hath numbered them (all) exactly.

C2531. Allah has no sons or favorites or parasites, such as we associate with human beings.

On the other hand every creature of His gets His love, and His cherishing care.

Everyone of them, however humble, is individually marked before His Throne of Justice and Mercy, and will stand before Him on his own deserts.

وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَرْدًا (٩٥)

95. And every one of them will come to him singly on the Day of Judgment.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وُدًّا (٩٦)

96. On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow Love.

C2532. His own love, and the love of man's fellow-creatures, in this world and in the Hereafter.

Goodness breeds love and peace, and sin breeds hatred and contention.

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ...

97. So have We made the (Qur'án) easy in thine own tongue,

لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ بِهِ قَوْمًا لُّدًّا (٩٧)...

that with it thou mayest give Glad Tidings to the righteous, and warnings to people given to contention.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْنٍ...

98. But how many (countless) generation before them have We destroyed?

C2533. Cf. 19:74, from which this sentence is brought up as a reminiscence, showing the progress of sin, the Guidance which Allah gives to the good, the degradation of blasphemy, the respite granted, and the final End, when personal responsibility will be enforced.

هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا (٩٨)...

Canst thou find a single one of them (now) or hear (so much as) a whisper of them?



اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

Allah! there is no god but He! To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Ta Ha

طه

Introduction and Summary

The chronology of the Surah has some significance: it has some relation to the spiritual lessons which it teaches.

It was used with great effect in that remarkable scene which resulted in Umar's conversion, and which took place about the seventh year before the Hijrah. The scene is described with dramatic details by Ibn Hisham.

Umar had previously been one of the greatest enemies and persecutors of Islam. Like his blood-thirsty kinsmen the

Quraysh be meditated slaying the Prophet, when it was suggested to him that there were near relations of his that had embraced Islam. His sister Fatima and her husband Sa'id were Muslims, but in those days of persecution they had kept their faith secret. When Umar went to their house, he heard them reciting this Surah from a written copy they had. For awhile they concealed the copy. Umar attacked his sister and her husband, but they bore the attack with exemplary patience, and declared their faith. Umar was so struck with their sincerity and fortitude that he asked to see the leaf from which they had been reading. It was given to him: his soul was touched, and he not only came into the Faith but became one of its strongest supporters and champions.

The leaf contained some portion of the Surah, perhaps the introductory portion.

The mystic letters Ta Ha are prefixed to this Surah.

What do they mean?

The earliest tradition is that they denote a dialectical interjection meaning "O man!" If so, the title particularly appropriate in two ways.

1. It was a direct and personal address to a man in a high state of excitement, tempted by his temper to do grievous wrong, but called by Allah's Grace, as by a personal appeal, to face the realities, for Allah knew his inmost secret thoughts (20:7): the revelation was sent by Allah, Most Gracious, out of His Grace and Mercy (20:5).

2. It takes up the story from the last Surah, of man as a spiritual being and illustrates it in further details.

It tells the story of Moses in the crisis of his life when he received Allah's Commission and in his personal relation with his mother, and how he came to be brought up in the Pharaoh's house, to learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians, for use in Allah's service, and in his personal relations with Pharaoh, whom we take to be his adoptive father (28:9).

It further tells the story of a fallen soul who misled the Israelites into idolatry, and recalls how man's Arch-enemy Satan caused his fall. Prayer and praise are necessary to man to cure his spiritual blindness and enable him to appreciate Allah's revelation. (R).

Summery- The revelation of Allah (the Quran) is not an occasion of distress, but is a gift of mercy from Allah Most Gracious (20:1-8, and C. 142).

How Moses was first chosen, and led to his mission to Pharaoh with his brother Aaron (20:9-36, and C. 143).

How mother of Moses was directed to cast the infant Moses into the river, to be brought up in Pharaoh's house under Allah's own supervision, in order to preach to Pharaoh and declare Allah's glory (20:37-76, and C. 144).

How Moses was directed to lead his people and quell their rebellious spirit, and how that spirit was stirred up by Samiri (20:77-104, and C. 145).

On the Day of Judgement personal responsibility will be enforced, and Allah's Truth acknowledged: man should guard against Adam's enemy, Satan, and should renounce vanities, purify himself with prayer and praise, and await the call to Allah (20:105-135, and C. 146).

C.142 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(20:1-8)

Allah's revelation is not an occasion
For man's distress: it is a Message
To show that Allah the All-Knowing sits
On the throne of Mercy and guides all affairs.
There is no god but He: to Him
Belong all the Most Beautiful Names.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طه (١)

1. Ta Ha.

C2534. For an explanation see the Introduction to this Surah.

If the meaning is "O man!" that is itself a mystic meaning, as explained, but the letters form a word and would not be classified strictly as abbreviated Letters: see n. 25 to 2:1.

This, however, is a question of classification and does not affect the meaning. This is conjectural, and no one can be dogmatic about it.

مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ (٢)

2. We have not sent down the Qur'án to thee to be (an occasion) for thy distress,

C2535. Allah's revelation may cause some human trouble for two reasons:

- it checks man's selfishness and narrowness of view, and
- it annoys the wicked and causes them to jeer and persecute.

These are mere incidental things, due to man's own shortcomings. As far as the trouble is concerned, the revelation is meant to give a warning, so that persecutors may be reclaimed, (and of course for men of faith it is comfort and consolation, though that point does not arise in this context).

إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَىٰ (٣)

3. But only as an admonition to those who fear (Allah) --

تَنزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَىٰ (٤)

4. A revelation from Him Who created the earth and the heavens on high.

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى (٥)

5. (Allah) Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority).

C2536. Cf. 10:3. n. 1386.

If things seem to be wrong in our imperfect vision on this earth, we must remember Allah, Who encompasses all Creation and sits on the throne of Grace and Mercy, is in command, and our Faith tells us that all must be right.

Allah's authority is not like an authority on earth, which may be questioned, or which may not last. His authority is "firmly established".

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى (٦)

6. To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all between them, and all beneath the soil.

C2537. An exhaustive definition of everything we can conceive of;

- what is in the heavens,
- on the earth,
- or between,
- or within the bowels of the earth.

وَإِن تَجْهَرْ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى (٧)

7. If thou pronounce the word aloud, (it is no matter): for verily He knoweth what is secret and what is yet more hidden.

C2538. There are two or three implications.

- Whatever you profess, or say aloud, gives no information to Allah: He knows not only what is secret and perhaps unknown to others, but what people take special care to conceal.
- It does you no good to make insincere professions: your hidden motives are known to Him, Who alone matters.
- If you read the Word of Allah, or if you pray to Allah, it is not necessary to raise your voice: in either case,

Allah will judge you by your inner thoughts which are like an open book to Him.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

8. Allah! there is no god but He!

...لَهُ الْأَسْمَاء الْحُسْنَى (٨)

To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.

C2539. Cf. 17:110 and n. 2322.

Allah is The One and the most beautiful things we can think of are referable to Him. His names refer to His attributes which are like titles of Honour and Glory. (R).

C.143 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(20:9-36)

The story of how Moses was chosen and told
Of his mission, has a high mystic meaning.
He was true to his family and solicitous
For their welfare. Encamped in the desert,
He saw a fire far off. Approaching,
He found it was holy ground. Allah
Did reveal Himself to him, so
That he saw life in things lifeless,
And light in his glorified Hand, that shone
White with light divine. Armed
With these Signs he was told to go forth
On his mission. But he thought of his brother
Aaron, and prayed that Allah might join him
In his mission, and his prayer was granted.

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى (٩)

9. Has the story of Moses reached thee?

C2540. The story of Moses in its different incidents is told in many places in the Quran, and in each case the phase most appropriate in the context is referred to or emphasised.

- In 2:49-61, it was a phase from the religious history of mankind;
- in 7:103-162, it was a phase from the story of the Ummah (or nation) of Israel, and the story was continued to the times after Moses,
- in 17:101-103, we have a picture of the decline of a soul in the arrogance of Pharaoh;
- here, in 20:9-24, we have a picture of the rise of a soul in the commission given to Moses from Allah;
- in 20:25-36, we have his spiritual relationship with his brother Aaron;
- in 20:37-40, we have his spiritual relation with his mother and sister, and his upbringing;
- in 20:41-76, we have his spiritual combat with Pharaoh; and
- in 20:77-98, we have his spiritual combat with his own people, the Israelites. For other incidents, consult the Index.

إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا ...

10. Behold, he saw a fire:

C2541. A fire: It appeared like an ordinary fire, which always betokens the presence of men in a desert or a lonely place.

Moses made for it alone, to fetch the wherewithal for making a fire for his family, and perhaps to find some direction as to the way, from the people he should meet there.

But it was not an ordinary fire. It was a Burning Bush: a Sign of the Glory of Allah.

... فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا...

so he said to his family, "Tarry ye; I perceive a fire;

...لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى (١٠)

perhaps I can bring you some burning brand therefrom or find some guidance at the fire."

C2542. The spiritual history of Moses begins here.

It was the beginning of his mission. His physical life, infancy, and upbringing are referred to later on, to illustrate another point.

Moses, when he grew up, left the palace of Pharaoh and went to the Midianite people, in the Sinai peninsula. He married among them, and was now traveling with his family, when he was called to his mission by Allah.

He went to look for a fire for comfort and guidance. He found a higher and holier comfort and guidance. The whole passage is full of portent meaning, which is reflected in the short rhymed verses in the original. (R).

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَى (١١)

11. But when he came to the fire, a voice was heard:
"O Moses!

...إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ

12. "Verily I am thy Lord!
Therefore (in My presence) put off thy shoes:

C2543. The shoes are to be put off as a mark of respect.

Moses was now to put away his mere worldly interests, he having been chosen by Allah, the Most High. (R).

...إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى (١٢)

thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa.

C2544. This was the valley just below Mount Sinai, where subsequently he was to receive the Torah.

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى (١٣)

13. "I have chosen thee:

listen, then, to the inspiration (sent to thee).

إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ...

14. "Verily, I am Allah:

...لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا...

there is no god but I:

...فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (١٤)

so serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise.

...إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ ءَاتِيَةٌ...

15. "Verily the Hour is coming --

C2545. The first need is to mend our lives and worship and serve Allah, as in the last verse.

The next is to realise the meaning of the Hereafter, when every soul will get the meed of its conduct in this life.

...أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى (١٥)

My design is to keep it hidden -- for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavour.

C2546. Ukhfi may mean either "keep it hidden", or "make it manifest",

and the Commentators have taken, some one meaning and some the other.

- If the first is taken, it means that the exact hour or day when the Judgment comes is hidden from man;
- if the second, it means that the fact of the Judgment to come is made known, that man may remember and take warning.

I think that both meanings are implied. (R).

فَلاَ يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ...

16. "Therefore let not such as believe not therein but follow their own lusts,

...فَتَرْدَى (١٦)

divert thee therefrom, lest thou perish!"

C2547. Moses had yet to meet the formidable opposition of the arrogant, Pharaoh and his proud Egyptians, and latter, the rebellion of his own people. In receiving his commission, he is warned of both dangers. This relates to man's own soul:

when once the light reaches him, let him hold fast to it lest he perish.

He will be beset with dangers of all kinds around him, the worst will be the danger of unbelieving people who seem to thrive on their selfishness and in following their own vain desires! (R).

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى (١٧)

17. "And what is that in thy right hand, O Moses?"

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ...

18. He said, "It is my rod: on it I lean;

C2548. Now comes the miracle of the rod.

First of all, the attention of Moses himself is drawn to it, and he thinks of the ordinary uses to which he puts it in his daily life. (R).

...أَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي...

with it I beat down fodder for my flocks;

...وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَى (١٨)

and in it I find other uses."

قَالَ أَلْقِهَا يَا مُوسَى (١٩)

19. (Allah) said, "Throw it, O Moses!"

فَأَلْقَاهَا...

20. He threw it,

فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى (٢٠)...

and behold! it was a snake, active in motion.

C2549. Cf. 7:107, where a different word (thu'ban) is used for "snake" and the qualifying adjective is "plain (for all to see)".

The scene there is before Pharaoh and his magicians and people: the object is to show the hollowness of their magic by a miracle: the rod appears before them as a long and creeping writhing serpent.

Here there is a symbol to present Allah's power to Moses' mind and understanding: the rod becomes a **Hayy** (a live snake), and its "live motion is what is most to be impressed on the mind of Moses, for there were no other spectators. So the highest spiritual mysteries can be grasped, with Allah's gift of insight, from the most ordinary things of daily use. Once they are grasped, there is no question of fear. They really are the virtues of this life lifted up to the glorious spiritual plane.

قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ...

We shall return it at once to its former condition"...

سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَى (٢١)...

We shall return it at once to its former condition"...

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ...

22. "Now draw thy hand close to thy side:

it shall come forth white (and shining), without harm (or stain) --

C2550. The second of the greater Miracles shown to Moses was the "White (shining) Hand".

Ordinarily, when the skin becomes white, it is a sign of disease, leprosy or something loathsome. Here there was no question of disease: on the contrary, the hand was glorified, and it shone as with a divine light.

Such a miracle was beyond Egyptian or human magic. (R).

آيَةً أُخْرَى (٢٢)...

as another Sign --

لِنُرِيَكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى (٢٣)

23. "In order that We may show thee (two) of Our Greater Signs.

اذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى (٢٤)

24. "Go thou to Pharaoh, for he had indeed transgressed all bounds."

C2551. Moses, having been spiritually prepared now gets his definite commission to go to Pharaoh and point out the error of his ways.

So inordinate was Pharaoh's vanity that he had it in his mind to say: "I am your Lord Most High!" (79:24).

Section 2

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي (٢٥)

25. (Moses) said:

"O my Lord! expand me my breast;"

C2552. The **breast** is reputed to be the seat of knowledge and affections.

The gift of the highest spiritual insight is what he prays for first. Cf. 94:1.

This was the most urgent in point of time. There are three other things he also asks for: viz.

1. Allah's help in his task, which at first appears difficult to him,
2. the gift of eloquence, and the removal of the impediment from his speech; and
3. the counsel and constant attendance with him of his brother Aaron, whom he loved and trusted, for he would otherwise be alone among the Egyptians.

وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي (٢٦)

26. "Ease my task for me;

وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي (٢٧)

27. "And remove the impediment from my speech.

C2553. Literally, "Loosen a knot from my tongue".

يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي (٢٨)

28. "So they may understand what I say:

وَاجْعَل لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي (٢٩)

29. "And give me a Minister from my family,

هَارُونَ أَخِي (٣٠)

30. "Aaron, my brother;

اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي (٣١)

31. "Add to my strength through him,

C2554. Literally, "Strengthen my back with him".

A man's strength lies in his back and backbone so that he can stand erect and boldly face his tasks.

وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي (٣٢)

32. "And make him share my task:

كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا (٣٣)

33. "That we may celebrate Thy praise without stint,

C2555. The requests that Moses makes are inspired, not by earthly but by spiritual motives.

The motive, expressed in the most general terms, is to glorify Allah, not in an occasional way, but systematically and continuously, "without stint".

The clauses in this verse and the next, taken together, govern all the requests he makes, from verse 25 to verse 32.

وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا (٣٤)

34. "And remember Thee without stint:

إِنَّكَ كُنتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا (٣٥)

35. "For Thou art He that (ever) regardeth us."

C2556. The celebration of Allah's praise and remembrance is one form of showing gratitude on the part of Moses for the Grace which Allah has bestowed upon him.

قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى (٣٦)

36. (Allah) said:

"Granted is thy prayer, O Moses!"

C.144 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(20: 37-76)

From his birth was Moses prepared for his task.
His mother received guidance, so that
Allah's purpose might be fulfilled. Moses
Was brought up in Pharaoh's palace and trained
In all the learning of Egypt. Yet be drank
The Love of his people in his mother's milk
Adventures and trials he had, including
His stay with the Midianites-until
He was called to his double mission: to preach
To Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and to free
His own people. So he and Aaron went
To Pharaoh, who rejected Allah and His Signs,
But appointed a trial of strength between
His magicians and Moses. Moses won;
And the Truth of Allah was accepted
By some Egyptians, but not by Pharaoh.

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى (٣٧)

37. "And indeed We conferred a favor on thee another time (before).

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَى (٣٨)

38. "Behold! We sent to thy mother, by inspiration, the message:

C2557. The story is not told, but only those salient points recapitulated which bear on the upbringing and work of Moses.

Long after the age of Joseph, who had been a Wazir to one of the Pharaohs, there came on the throne of Egypt a Pharaoh who hated the Israelites and wanted them annihilated. He ordered Israelite male children to be killed when they were born.

Moses' mother hid him for a time, but when further concealment was impossible, a thought came into her mind that she should put her child into a chest and send the chest floating down the Nile. This was not merely a foolish fancy of hers. It was Allah's Plan to bring up Moses in all the learning of the Egyptians, in order that that learning itself should be used to expose what was wrong in it and to advance the glory of Allah.

The chest was floated into the river Nile. It flowed on into a stream that passed through Pharaoh's Garden. It was picked up by Pharaoh's people and the child was adopted by Pharaoh's wife.

See 28:4-13.

أَنِ اقْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَاقْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ...

39. "'Throw (the child) into the chest, and throw (the chest) into the river:

...بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهُ...

the river will cast him up on the bank, and he will be taken up by one who is an enemy to Me and an enemy to him':

C2558. Pharaoh was an enemy to Allah, because he was puffed up and he blasphemed, claiming to be God himself.

He was an enemy to the child Moses, because he hated the Israelites and wanted to have their male children killed; also because Moses stood for Allah's revelation to come.

...وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي ...

but I cast (the garment of) love over thee from Me:

C2559. Allah made the child comely and lovable, and he attracted the love of the very people who, on general grounds, would have killed him.

... وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي (٣٩)

and (this) in order that thou mayest be reared under Mine eye.

C2560. See n. 2558 above.

By making the child Moses so attractive as to be adopted into Pharaoh's household, not only was Moses brought up in the best way possible from an earthly point of view, but Allah's special Providence looked after him in bringing his mother to him, as stated in the next verse, and thus nourishing him on his mother's milk and keeping him in touch, in his inner growth, with the feelings and sentiments of his people Israel.

... إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ

40. "Behold! thy sister goeth forth and saith,

... هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى مَن يَكْفُلُهُ...

'Shall I show you one who will nurse and rear the (child)?'

C2561. We may suppose that the anxious mother, after the child was floated on the water, sent the child's sister to follow the chest from the bank and see where and by whom it was picked up. When it was picked up by Pharaoh's own family and they seemed to love the child, she appeared like a stranger before them, and said, "Shall I search out a good wet-nurse for the child, that she may rear the child you are going to adopt?"

That was exactly what they wanted. She ran home and told her mother. The mother was delighted to come and

fold the infant in her arms again and feed it at her own breast, and all openly and without any concealment.

...فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَى أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ...

So We brought thee back to thy mother, that her eye might be cooled and she should not grieve.

C2562. The mother's eyes had, we may imagine, been sore with scalding tears at the separation from her baby.

Now they were cooled: a phrase meaning that her heart was comforted.

...وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا...

Then thou didst slay a man, but We saved thee from trouble, and We tried thee in various ways.

C2563. Years passed. The child grew up. In outward learning he was of the house of Pharaoh.

In his inner soul and sympathy he was of Israel. One day, he went to the Israelite colony and saw all the Egyptian oppression under which Israel labored. He saw an Egyptian smiling an Israelite, apparently with impunity.

Moses felt brotherly sympathy and smote the Egyptian. He did not intend to, kill him, but in fact the Egyptian died of the blow. When this became known, his position in Pharaoh's household became impossible. So he fled out of Egypt, and was only saved by Allah's grace.

He fled to the Sinai Peninsula, to the land of the Midianites, and had various adventures. He married one of the daughters of the Midianite chief, and lived with the Midianites for many years, as an Egyptian stranger. He had many trials and temptations, but he retained his integrity of character.

...فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ...

Then didst thou tarry a number of years with the people of Midian.

C2564. See last note.

After many years spent in a quiet life, grazing his father-in-law's flocks, he came one day to the valley of Tuwa underneath the great mountain mass of Sinai, called Tur (in Arabic). The peak on the Arabian side (where Moses was) was called Horeb by the Hebrews.

Then was fulfilled Allah's Plan: he saw the fire in the distance, and when he went up, he was addressed by Allah and chosen to be Allah's Messenger for that age.

ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَا مُوسَىٰ (٤٠)...

Then didst thou come hither as ordained, O Moses!

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي (٤١)

41. "And I have prepared thee for Myself (for service)"...

اذْهَبْ أَنتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي (٤٢)

42. "Go, thou and thy brother, with My Signs, and slacken not, either of you, in keeping Me in remembrance.

C2565. We may suppose that Moses had fled alone to the land of Midian, and that he had now come alone (with his family but not with his brother) to Tuwa, as described in n. 2542 above.

When he was honoured with his mission, and was granted his request that his brother Aaron should accompany him, we may suppose that he took steps to get Aaron to come to him, and their meeting was in Tuwa. Some time may be supposed to have elapsed before they were in Egypt, and then they prayed, and received these directions in their Egyptian home.

Aaron was either an elder or a younger brother, we are not told which. In either case he was born when the ban on Israelite new-born babes was not in operation. Moses had been out of touch with him, and it speaks greatly for his family affection that he remembered him and prayed for his comradeship in the most serious spiritual work of his life.

اذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ ...

43. "Go, both of you, to Pharaoh,

C2566. Their mission was in the first instance to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians, and then to lead Israel out of Egypt.

... إِنَّهُ طَغَى (٤٣)

for he has indeed transgressed all bounds;

C2567. Compare the same phrase in 20:24.

Having glanced at the early life of Moses we come back now to the time when Moses' actual ministry begins. The earlier personal story of Moses is rounded off.

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى (٤٤)

44. "But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah)."

C2568. So far Pharaoh in his inordinate vanity had forgotten himself and forgotten how small a creature he was before Allah. This was to be brought to his recollection, so that he might perhaps repent and believe, or at least be deterred by fear from "transgressing all bounds".

Some men eschew wrong from sincere love of Allah and understanding of their fellow-men, and some (of coarser minds) from the fear of consequences. Even the latter conduct may be a step to the former.

قَالَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا نَخَافُ أَن يَفْرُطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَن يَطْغَى (٤٥)

45. They (Moses and Aaron) said:

"Our Lord! we fear lest he hasten with **insolence** against us, or lest he transgress all bounds."

C2569. They were now in Egypt (see n. 2565 above) and therefore in the power of the Pharaoh. The local atmosphere called for the greatest courage and firmness on their part to carry out the dangerous mission which had been entrusted to them.

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا...

46. He said:

"Fear not: for I am with you:

...إِنَّنِي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى (٤٦)

I hear and see (everything).

فَأْتِيَاهُ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ...

47. "So go ye both to him, and say,

'Verily we are Messengers sent by thy Lord:

...فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَا تُعَذِّبْهُمْ...

send forth, therefore, the Children of Israel with us, and afflict them not:

C2570. The Children of Israel were subjected to all sorts of oppression and indignities. They were given hard tasks; their leaders were unjustly beaten; they were forced to make bricks without straw; and they "groaned in bondage" (Exod. 5:6-19. 6:5).

...قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ...

with a Sign, indeed, have we come from thy Lord!

...وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَى (٤٧)

And peace to all who follow guidance!

C2571. Allah, in His infinite Mercy, always offers Peace to the most hardened sinners, even those who are warring against Him.

But, as stated in the next verse, their defiance cannot go on with impunity indefinitely. The punishment must inevitably come for sin, whether the sinner is great or small.

إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَى مَن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (٤٨)

48. "'Verily it has been revealed to us that the Penalty (awaits) those who reject and turn away.'"

قَالَ فَمَن رَّبُّكُمَا يَا مُوسَى (٤٩)

49. (When this message was delivered), (Pharaoh) said: "Who, then, O Moses, is the Lord of you two?"

C2572. Notice how subtly Pharaoh rejects the implication in Moses' speech, in which Moses had referred to "thy Lord" (verse 47).

Pharaoh implicitly repudiates the suggestion that the God who had sent Moses and Aaron could possibly be Pharaoh's Lord. He asks insolently, "Who is this Lord of yours, of Whom ye speak as having sent you?"

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى (٥٠)

50. He said: "Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance."

C2573. The answer of Moses is straightforward, dignified, and illuminating. He will not dispute about "my Lord" or "your Lord," the God of Israel, or the God of Egypt. He and his brother were proud to serve "our Lord," but He was the universal Lord and Cherisher, the One and Only God, Who had created all beings and all things.

It was from Him that each created thing derived its form and nature, including such free-will and power as man had got.

He, Pharaoh, was subject to the same condition. In order that the free-will should be rightly exercised, Allah had given guidance through His Messengers, and His Signs. Moses and Aaron stood as such Messengers, with such Signs. Will Pharaoh now understand and do right?

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى (٥١)

51. (Pharaoh) said: "What then is the condition of previous generations?"

C2574. But Pharaoh was not the man to accept teaching from the despised Israelite- one, too, who in his eyes was a renegade from the higher Egyptian civilisation.

"If," he says in effect, "there is only one God, to Whom all things are referred, this is a new religion.

What of the religion of our ancestors?

Were they wrong in worshipping the Egyptian gods?

And if they were wrong, are they in misery now?

He wanted to trap Moses into a scathing denunciation of his ancestors, which would at once have deprived him of the sympathy or the hearing of the Egyptian crowd.

قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِندَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ...

52. He replied:

"The knowledge of that is with my Lord, duly recorded:

C2575. Moses did not fall into the trap. He remembered the injunction given to him to speak mildly (20:44). He speaks mildly, but does not in any way whittle down the truth.

He said in effect: 'Allah's knowledge is perfect, as if, with men, it were a record. For men may make mistakes or may not remember, but Allah never mistakes and never forgets.

But Allah is not only All-Knowing: He is also All-Good. Look around you: the whole earth is spread out like a carpet. Men go to and fro in it freely. He sends abundance of water from the skies, which comes down in Nile floods and fertilizes the whole soil of Egypt, and feeds men and animals.'

...لَّا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنسَى (٥٢)

my Lord never errs, nor forgets --

...الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا

53. "He Who has made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels);

C2576. Sabil means not only a road, but would include water-roads or channels, and in modern conditions, airways- in fact all means of communication.

وَأَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاء ...

and has sent down water from the sky."

C2577. This seems to be outside the speech of Moses, and connects itself with the following verses 54-56, as part of the Word of Allah, expanding the speech of Moses and explaining the working of Allah's Providence in nature.

... فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّن نَّبَاتٍ شَتَّى (٥٣)

With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others.

C2578. Azwaj. - we might translate here (as in 15:88) by "classes" instead of "pairs"; but as sex in plants seems to be referred to elsewhere (see 13:3, and n. 1804), 1 translate "pairs".

كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ...

54. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle:

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُوْلِي النُّهَى (٥٤)

verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding.

Section 3

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ...

55. From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you,

...وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى (٥٥)

and from it shall We bring you out once again.

C2579. The verse ought really to go into the last Section.

وَلَقَدْ أَرَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَى (٥٦)

56. And We showed Pharaoh all Our Signs, but he did reject and refuse.

C2580. This is a sort of general introduction to the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh.

The Signs are not only the countering of the fraudulent magic of Egypt with real miracles, but the subsequent Plagues (not mentioned here) and the Crossing of the Red Sea by Israel. (R).

قَالَ أَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَا مُوسَى (٥٧)

57. He said: "Hast thou come to drive us out of our land with thy magic, O Moses?

C2581. The Egyptians accused Moses of a design to deprive them of their land, and of exercising black magic.

Both charges were palpably false.

What Moses wanted to do was to free his people from bondage. The Egyptians had all the power in their possession.

As to magic, the Egyptians judged Moses by themselves. They accused the Prophet of Allah of doing the same, though both his outlook and the source of his strength were altogether different.

فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا...

58. "But we can surely produce magic to match thine!
So make a tryst between us and thee,

...لَّا نُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنتَ مَكَانًا سُوًى (٥٨)

which we shall not fail to keep -- neither we nor thou -- in a place where both shall have even chances."

C2582. Suwan: literally, 'equal, even'.

It has been construed to mean:

- a place equally distant for both sides, a central place, or
- equally convenient to both sides, or

- an open level plain, where the people can collect with ease.

All these are possible meanings, but the one I have adopted is more comprehensive, and includes the others, viz.:

> a place where both sides shall have even chances. "a fair place," as Palmer Laconically translates it.

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّينَةِ وَأَن يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى (٥٩)

59. Moses said: "Your tryst is the Day of the Festival, and let the people be assembled when the sun is well up."

C2583. A great day of a Temple Festival, when the temples and streets were decorated, and people were on holiday, free from work.

Moses makes this appointment in order to collect as large a number as possible, for his first duty is to preach the Truth. And he apparently did it with some effect with some Egyptians (20:70, 72-76), though the Pharaoh and his high and mighty officers rejected the Truth and afterwards paid the Penalty.

فَتَوَلَّى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَتَى (٦٠)

60. So Pharaoh withdrew: he concerted his plan, and then came (back).

C2584. Pharaoh was apparently taken aback at Moses appointing a solemn day of public Festival, when there would be a large concourse and there would be sure to be some people not in the Court clique, who might be critical of Pharaoh's own sorcerers.

But probably there was something more in their dark counsels, something unfair and wicked, to which Moses refers in his speech in the next verse.

قَالَ لَهُم مُّوسَى...

61. Moses said to him:

...وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ...

"Woe to you! forge not ye a lie against Allah, lest He destroy you (at once) utterly by chastisement:

...وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرَى (٦١)

the forger must suffer frustration!"

C2585. Moses had some idea of their trickery and deceit. They would palm off their fraudulent magic as coming from Allah or from their gods!

He warns them that their tricks will stand exposed, and their hopes will be defeated.

فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسَرُّوا النَّجْوَى (٦٢)

62. So they disputed, one with another, over their affair, but they kept their talk secret.

C2586. They knew that they had here to deal with no ordinary man, but a man with powers above what they could conceive of.

But evil always thinks evil. Judging Moses and Aaron by their own standards, they thought that these two were also tricksters, with some tricks superior to their own. All they had to do was to stand together, and they must win.

I construe 20:63-64 to be private talk among themselves, followed by their open challenge to Moses in 20:65.

قَالُوا إِنْ هَذَانِ لَسَاحِرَ...

63. They said:

"These two are certainly (expert) magicians:

...انِ يُرِيدَانِ أَن يُخْرِجَاكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُم بِسِحْرِهِمَا...

their object is to drive you out from your land with their magic,

...وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلَى (٦٣)

and to do away with your most cherished institutions.

C2587. Cf. 20:104.

'Your most cherished institutions,' i.e., 'your ancestral and time- honoured religion and magic'.

Muthla, feminine of Amthal, most distinguished, honoured, cherished.

Tariqat: way of life, institutions, conduct.

فَأَجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ ائْتُوا صَفًّا...

64. "Therefore concert your plan. And then assemble in (serried) ranks:

...وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَى (٦٤)

he wins (all along) today who gains the upper hand."

C2588. Presumably Pharaoh was in this secret conference, and he promises the most lavish rewards to the magicians if they overcome Moses. See 7:114. That- but I think more than that-is implied.

That day was to be the crisis: if they won then, they would win all along, and Moses and his people would be crushed.

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِمَّا أَن تُلْقِيَ وَإِمَّا أَن نَّكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَى (٦٥)

65. They said:

"O Moses! whether wilt thou that thou throw (first) or that we be the first to throw?"

قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا...

66. He said, "Nay, throw ye first!"

...فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِن سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى (٦٦)

Then behold their ropes and their rods -- so it seemed to him on account of their magic -- began to be in lively motion!

C2589. Their bag of tricks was so clever that it imposed upon all beholders.

Their ropes and their rods were thrown, and seemed to move about like snakes. So realistic was the effect that

even Moses felt the least bit of doubt in his own mind. He of course had no tricks, and he relied entirely on Allah.

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُّوسَى (٦٧)

67. So Moses conceived in his mind a (sort of) fear.

C2590. The concerted attack of evil is sometimes so well contrived from all points that falsehood appears and is acclaimed as the truth. The believer of truth is isolated, and a sort of moral dizziness creeps over his mind.

But by Allah's grace Faith asserts itself, gives him confidence, and points out the specific truths which will dissipate and destroy the teeming brood of falsehood.

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْأَعْلَى (٦٨)

68. We said: "Fear not! for thou hast indeed the upper hand:

وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا...

69. "Throw that which is in thy right hand: quickly will it swallow up that which they have faked.

...إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدُ سَاحِرٍ...

What they have faked is but a magician's trick:

...وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَى (٦٩)

and the magician thrives not (no matter) where he goes."

C2591. The meaning may be either

- that falsehood and trickery may have their day, but they cannot win everywhere, especially in the presence of Truth, or
- that trickery and magic must come to an evil end.

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَى (٧٠)

70. So the magicians were thrown down to prostration: they said,

"We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses."

C2592. Cf. this passage with 7:120-126 and n. 1082, and n. 1083.

قَالَ آمَنتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ...

71. (Pharaoh) said:

"Believe ye in Him before I give you permission?

...إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ...

Surely this must be your leader, who has taught you magic!

C2593. Pharaoh accuses his sorcerers who have been converted, of having been in league with Moses all the time, and in fact of having been led and taught by him!

So arrogance and evil cannot conceive of Allah's worlds and worlds of beauty and truth beyond its own narrow vision! It is truly blind and its very cleverness deludes it to wander fat from the truth.

...فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ...

Be sure I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will have you crucified on trunks of palm-trees:

...وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ أَيُّنَا أَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى (٧١)

So shall ye know for certain, which of us can give the more severe and the more lasting Punishment!"

قَالُوا لَن نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلَى مَا جَاءنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا...

72. They said:

"Never shall we regard thee as more than the Clear Signs that have come to us, or than Him Who created us!

C2594. Clear Signs:

- the miracles,
- the personality of the Messengers of Allah,
- the logic of events as they unfolded themselves, and
- the light of inner conviction in their own conscience.

There are in addition the Signs and Proofs of Allah in nature, which are referred to in many places, e.g., 20:53-54.

...فَاقْضِ مَا أَنتَ قَاضٍ...

So decree whatever thou desirest to decree:

...إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (٧٢)

for thou canst only decree (touching) the life of this world.

C2595. Thus was the first part of the mission of Moses- that to the Egyptians- fulfilled.

See n. 1083 to 7:126; also Appendix V.

...إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطَايَانَا

73. "For us, we have believed in our Lord: may He forgive us our faults,

...وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ...

and the magic to which thou didst compel us:

C2596. The magic mummery, and deceptions which pertained to Egyptian Pagan religion became a creed, a State article of faith, to which all citizens were compelled to bow, and which its priests were compelled actively to practice. And Pharaoh was at the head of the whole system-the high priest or the supreme god. With justice, therefore, do the converted magicians lay the blame on Pharaoh, effectively negativing Pharaoh's disingenuous charge that they had been in league with Moses.

These falsehoods and deceptions-combined in many cases with horrid cruelties, open and secret,-were common to many Pagan systems. Some of them have been investigated in detail in Sir John G. Frazer' Golden Bough.

...وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى (٧٣)

for Allah is Best and Most Abiding."

...إِنَّهُ مَن يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ

74. Verily he who comes to his Lord as a sinner (at judgment) -- for him is Hell:

C2597. The verses 20:74-76 are best construed as comments on the story of the converted Egyptians who had "purified themselves (from evil)".

But some construe them as a continuation of their speech.

...لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى (٧٤)

therein shall he neither die nor live.

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَى (٧٥)

75. But such as comes to Him as Believers who have worked righteous deeds -- for them are ranks exalted --

...جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا

76. Gardens of Eternity, beneath which flow rivers:
they will dwell therein for aye:

...وَذَلِكَ جَزَاء مَن تَزَكَّى (٧٦)

such is the reward of those who purify themselves (from evil).

C2598. As the Egyptian magicians had done when they confessed the One True God.

C.145 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(20: 77-104)

The people of Israel were rescued from bondage
And led on their way to the Promised Land.
Allah's Grace gave them light and guidance, but they
Rebelled under the leadership of one
Called the Samiri; he melted the gold
Of their jewels and made an idol-a calf
For their worship-a thing without life or power.
Moses destroyed the idol, and cursed
The man who led the people astray.

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي...

77. We sent an inspiration to Moses:

"Travel by night with my servants,

C2599. Time passes, and at last Moses is commanded to leave Egypt with his people by night. They were to cross the Red Sea into the Sinai Peninsula. They were told to have no fear of Pharaoh or of the sea or of the unknown desert country of Sinai into which they were going.

They crossed dry-shod, while Pharaoh who came in pursuit with his troops was overwhelmed by the sea. He and his men all perished.

There is no emphasis on this episode here. But the emphasis is laid on the hard task which Moses had with his own people after he had delivered them from the Egyptian bondage.

...فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا...

and strike a dry path for them through the sea,

...لَّا تَخَافُ دَرَكًا وَلَا تَخْشَى (٧٧)

without fear of being overtaken (by Pharaoh), and without (any other) fear."

فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُم مِّنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ (٧٨)

78. Then Pharaoh pursued them with his forces, but the waters completely overwhelmed them and covered them up.

وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَمَا هَدَى (٧٩)

79. Pharaoh led his people astray instead of leading them aright.

C2600. It is the duty of kings and leaders to give the right lead of their people. Instead of that, the evil ones among them lead them astray and are the cause of the whole of the people perishing.

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَدْ أَنجَيْنَاكُم مِّنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ...

80. O ye Children of Israel!

We delivered you from your enemy,

...وَوَاعَدْنَاكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنَ...

and We made a Covenant with you on the right side of Mount (Sinai),

C2601. Right side: Cf. 19:52, and n. 2504, towards the end.

The Arabian side of Sinai (Jabal Musa) was the place where Moses first received his commission before going to Egypt, and also where he received the Torah after the Exodus from Egypt.

...وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى (٨٠)

and We sent down to you Manna and quails:

كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ...

81. (Saying):

"Eat of the good things We have provided for your sustenance,

C2602. Cf. 2:57 and n. 71; and 7:160.

1 should like to construe this not only literally but also metaphorically.

'Allah has looked after you and saved you. He has given you ethical and spiritual guidance. Enjoy the fruits of all this, but do not become puffed up and rebellious (another meaning in the root Taga); otherwise the Wrath of Allah is sure to descend on you.'

...وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي...

but commit no excess therein, lest My Wrath should justly descend on you:

...وَمَن يَحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَى (٨١)

and those on whom descends My Wrath do perish indeed!

C2603. This gives the key-note to Moses' constant tussle with his own people, and introduces immediately afterwards the incident of the golden calf.

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى (٨٢)

82. "But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right -- who, in fine are ready to receive true guidance."

وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَن قَوْمِكَ يَا مُوسَى (٨٣)

83. (When Moses was up on the mount, Allah said:)

"What made thee hasten in advance of thy people, O Moses?"

C2604. This was when Moses was up on the Mount for forty days and forty nights: 2:51, and n. 66.

Moses had left the elders of Israel with Aaron behind him: Exod. 24:14.

While he was in a state of ecstatic honour on the Mount, his people were enacting strange scenes down below. They were tested and tried, and they failed in the trial. They made a golden calf for worship, as described below.

See also 7:148-150 and notes 1112-1114 and 1115-1118.

قَالَ هُمْ أُولَاء عَلَى أَثَرِي وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَى (٨٤)

84. He replied:

"Behold, they are close on my footsteps:

I hastened to Thee, O my Lord, to please Thee."

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِن بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ (٨٥)

85. (Allah) said: "We have tested thy people in thy absence: the Samiri has led them astray."

C2605. Who was this Samiri?

If it was his personal name, it was sufficiently near the meaning of the original root-word to have the definite article attached to it:

Cf. the name of the Khalifa Mu'tasim (Al-Mu'tasim).

What was the root for "Samiri"?

If we look to old Egyptian, we have Shemer: A stranger, foreigner (Sir E.A. Wallis Budge's Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary, 1920,p. 815 b).

As the Israelites had just left Egypt, they might quite well have among them an Egyptianised Hebrew bearing that nickname. That the name Shemer was subsequently not unknown among the Hebrews is clear from the Old Testament.

In 3 Kings, 16:24 we read that Omri, king of Israel, the northern portion of the divided kingdom, who reigned about 903-896 B.C., built a new city, Samaria, on a hill which he bought from Shemer, the owner of the hill, for two talents of silver.

See also Renan: History of Israel, 2:210.

For a further discussion of the word, see n. 2608 below.

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا...

86. So Moses returned to his people in state of indignation and sorrow.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا...

He said: "O my people! did not your Lord make a handsome promise to you?

C2606. There are two promises referred to in this verse, the promise of Allah and the promise of the people of Israel.

They form one Covenant, which was entered into through their leader Moses. See 20:80, and 2:63, n. 78.

Allah's promise was to protect them and lead them to the Promised Land, and their promise was to obey Allah's Law and His commandments.

...أَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ...

Did then the promise seem to you long (in coming)?

...أَمْ أَرَدتُّمْ أَن يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُم مَّوْعِدِي (٨٦)

Or did ye desire that Wrath should descend from your Lord on you, and so ye broke your promise to me?"

...قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا

87. They said:

"We broke not the promise to thee, as far as lay in our power:

...وَلَكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِّن زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنَاهَا...

but we were made to carry the weight of the ornaments of the (whole) people, and we threw them (into the fire),

C2607. Cf. Exod. 12:35-36: the Israelites, before they left Egypt, borrowed from the Egyptians 'jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment'; and 'they spoiled the Egyptians"' i.e., stripped them of all their valuable jewelry.

Note that the answer of the backsliders is disingenuous in various ways.

1. The Samiri was no doubt responsible for suggesting the making of the golden calf, but they could not on that account disclaim responsibility for themselves: the burden of the sin is on him who commits it, and he cannot pretend that he was powerless to avoid it.
2. At most the weight of the gold they carried could not have been heavy even if one or two men carried it, but would have been negligible if distributed.
3. Gold is valuable, and it is not likely that if they wanted to disburden themselves of it, they had any need to light a furnace, melt it, and cast it into the shape of a calf.

...فَكَذَٰلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ (٨٧)

and that was what the Samiri suggested.

C2608. See n. 2605 about the Samiri.

If the Egyptian origin of the root is not accepted we have a Hebrew origin in "Shomer" a guard, watchman, sentinel. The Samiri may have been a watchman, in fact or by nickname.

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا ...

88. "Then he brought out (of the fire) before the (people) the image of a calf:

C2609. See. n. 1113 to 7:148, where the same words are used and explained.

... لَهُ خُوَارٌ...

it seemed to low:

C2610. See n. 1114 to 7:148.

...فَقَالُوا هَٰذَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ وَإِلَٰهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ (٨٨)

so they said: 'This is your god, and the god of Moses, but (Moses) has forgotten!'"

C2611. Moses has forgotten: i.e., 'forgotten both us and his god. He has been gone for so many days. He is searching for a god on the Mount when his god is really here!'

This is spoken by the Samiri and his partisans, but the people as a whole accepted it, and it therefore, becomes their speech.

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا (٨٩)

89. Could they not see that it could not return them a word (for answer), and that it had no power either to harm them or to do them good?

C2612. This is a parenthetical comment.

How blind the people were!

They had seen Signs of the true living God, and yet they were willing to worship this dead image!

The true living God had spoken in definite words of command, while this calf could only emit some sounds of lowing, which were themselves contrived by the fraud of the priests. This image could do neither good nor harm, while Allah was the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe, Whose Mercy was unbounded and Whose Wrath was terrible.

Section 5

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِن قَبْلُ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنتُم بِهِ...

90. Aaron had already, before this, said to them:

"O my people! ye are being tested in this:

C2613. "Resist this temptation: you are being tested in this. Do not follow after the semi-Egyptian Samiri, but obey me."

...وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي (٩٠)

for verily your Lord is (Allah) Most Gracious:

so follow me and obey my command."

C2614. The Bible story makes Aaron the culprit, which is inconsistent with his office as the high priest of Allah and the right hand of Moses. See n. 1116 to 7:150.

Our version is more consistent, and explains, through the example of the Samiri, the lingering influences of the Egyptian cult of Osiris the bull-god.

... قَالُوا

91. They had said:

C2615. Obviously Aaron's speech in the last verse, and the rebels' defiance in this verse, were spoken before the return of Moses from the Mount.

... لَن نَّبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَى (٩١)

"We will not abandon this cult, but we will devote ourselves to it until Moses returns to us."

C2616. The rebels had so little faith that they had given Moses up for lost, and never expected to see him again.

قَالَ يَا هَارُونُ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا (٩٢)

92. (Moses) said: "O Aaron! what kept thee back, when thou sawest them going wrong

أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي (٩٣)

93. "From following me?

Didst thou then disobey my order?"

C2617. Moses, when he came back, was full of anger and grief. His speech to Aaron is one of rebuke, and he was also inclined to handle him roughly:

see next verse.

The order he refers to is that stated in 7:142, "Act for me amongst my people: do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief."

قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمَّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي...

94. (Aaron) replied:

"O son of my mother! seize (me not) by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head!

C2618. Cf. 7:150.

...إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَن تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي (٩٤)

Truly I feared lest thou shouldst say,

'Thou hast caused a division among the Children of Israel, and thou didst not respect my word!'"

C2619. This reply of Aaron's is in no way inconsistent with the reply as noted in 7:150.

On the contrary there is a dramatic aptness in the different points emphasised on each occasion. In Surah 7, we were discussing the Ummah of Israel, and Aaron rightly says, "The people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slay me!" In addition, "Let not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune" he is referring by implication to his brother's wish to maintain unity among the people.

Here the unity is the chief point to emphasize: we are dealing with the Samiri as mischief-monger, and he could best be dealt with by Moses, who proceeds to do so.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ (٩٥)

95. (Moses) said: "What then is thy case, O Samiri?"

C2620. Moses now turns to the Samiri, and the Samiri's reply in the next verse sums up his character in a few wonderful strokes of character-painting.

The lesson of the whole of this episode is the fall of a human soul that nominally comes to Allah's Truth in a humble position but makes mischief when and as it finds occasion. It is no less dangerous and culpable than the arrogant soul, typified by Pharaoh, which gets into high places and makes its leadership the cause of ruin of a whole nation.

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ...

96. He replied:

"I saw what they saw not:

فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ...

so I took a handful (of dust) from the footprint of the Messenger,

...فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي (٩٦)

and threw it (into the calf): thus did my soul suggest to me."

C2621. This answer of the Samiri is a fine example of unblushing effrontery, careful evasion of issues, and invented falsehoods.

He takes upon himself to pretend that he had far more insight than anybody else: he saw what the crowd did not see. He saw something supernatural.

"The Messenger" is construed by many Commentators to mean the angel Gabriel. Rasul (plural, rusul) is used in several places for "angels" e.g., in 11:69, 77; 19:19; and 35:1.

But if we take it to mean the Messenger Moses, it means that the Samiri saw something sacred or supernatural in his footprints: perhaps he thinks a little flattery would make Moses forgive him. The dust became sacred, and

his throwing it into the calf made the calf utter a lowing sound! As if that was the point at issue!

He does not answer the charge of making an image for worship. But finally, with arrogant effrontery, he says, "Well, that is what my soul suggested to me, and that should be enough!"

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَن تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ...

97. (Moses) said: "Get thee gone! but thy (punishment) in this life will be that thou wilt say, 'Touch me not';

C2622. He and his kind were to become social lepers, untouchables; perhaps also sufficiently arrogant to hold others at arm's length, and say "Noli me tangere" (touch me not) .

...وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّن تُخْلَفَهُ...

and moreover (for a future penalty) thou hast a promise that will not fail:

C2623. Namely, the promised Wrath of Allah:

see 20:81, 89:25.

...وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ إِلَٰهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا...

now look at thy god, of whom thou hast become a devoted worshipper:

...لَّنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا (٩٧)

we will certainly (melt) it in a blazing fire and scatter it broadcast in the sea!"

C2624. The cast effigy was destroyed. Thus ends the Samiri's story, of which the lessons are indicated in n. 2620 above.

It may be interesting to pursue the transformations of the word Samiri in later times. For its origin see notes 2605 and 2608 above.

Whether the root of Samiri was originally Egyptian or Hebrew does not affect the later history. Four facts may be noted.

1. There was a man bearing a name of that kind at the time of Moses, and he led a revolt against Moses and was cursed by Moses.

2. In the time of King Omri (903-896 B.C.) of the northern kingdom of Israel, there was a man called Shemer, from whom, according to the Bible, was bought a hill on which was built the new capital of the kingdom, the town of Samaria.

3. The name of the hill was Shomer (watchman, vigilant guardian), and that form of the name also appears as the name of a man (see 3 Kings 16:24);

   some authorities think the town was called after the hill and not after the man (Hastings's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics), but this is for our present purposes immaterial.

4. There was and is a dissenting community of Israelites called Samaritans, who have their own separate Pentateuch and Targum, who claim to be the true Children of Israel, and who hold the Orthodox Jews in contempt as the latter hold them in contempt; they claim to be the true guardians (Shomerim) of the Law, and that is probably the true origin of the name Samaritan, which may go further back in time than the foundation of the town of Samaria. I think it probable that the schism originated from the time of Moses, and that the curse of Moses on the Samiri explains the position.

إِنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

98. But the God of you all is the One Allah:
there is no god but He:

...وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (٩٨)

all things He comprehends in His knowledge.

كَذَٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ...

for We have sent thee a Message from Our own Presence.

...وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِن لَّدُنَّا ذِكْرًا (٩٩)

for We have sent thee a Message from Our own Presence.

C2625. Thus superseding previous revelations; for this (the Quran) is direct from Allah, and is not a second-hand exposition on other men's authority.

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وِزْرًا (١٠٠)

100. If any do turn away therefrom, verily they will bear a burden on the Day of Judgement;

خَالِدِينَ فِيهِ...

101. They will abide in this (state):

...وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حِمْلًا (١٠١)

and grievous will the burden be to them on that Day --

C2626. Cf. 6:31.

If people are so immersed in the evanescent falsehoods of this life as to turn away from the True and the Eternal, they will have a rude awakening when the Judgment comes. These very things that they thought so enjoyable here;-

- taking advantage of others,
- material self-indulgence,
- nursing grievances instead of doing good, etc., -

will be a grievous burden to them that day, which they will not be able to escape or lighten.

يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ...

102. The Day when the Trumpet will be sounded:

...وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا (١٠٢)

that Day, We shall gather the sinful, blear-eyed (with terror),

C2627. Zurqa:

- having eyes different from the normal colour, which in the East is black and white;
- having blue eyes,
- or eyes afflicted with dimness or blindness, or squint;

hence metaphorically, blear-eyed (with terror).

يَتَخَافَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا (١٠٣)

103. In whispers will they consult each other:

"Ye tarried not longer than ten (Days);"

C2628. Faced with eternity they will realise that their life on this earth, or the interval between their sin and their punishment, had a duration which practically amounted to nothing.

They express this by the phrase "ten days", but their wiser heads think that even this is an over-estimate. It was but a brief day!

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ...

104. We know best what they will say,

...إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا (١٠٤)

when their leader most eminent in Conduct will say: "Ye tarried not longer than a day!"

C2629. Cf. 20:63 and n. 2587.

Note that it is the shrewdest and most versed in Life who will say this, because they will be the first to see the true situation.

C.146 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(20: 105-135)

Such is the lure of Evil; but high
And low will be leveled on the Day

Of Judgement, before the Eternal, the Gracious,
The King, the Truth, who sends the Quran
To teach and to warn. Will man remember
How Adam's arch-enemy, Satan, caused
His fall, and will he yet he blind
To the Signs of Allah? Nay-but let
Not Evil make you impatient: the Prize
Of the Hereafter is better than aught
Of the glitter of this life: wait in Faith
And the End will show the triumph
Of Truth, Goodness, and Righteousness.

Section 6

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ...

105. They ask thee concerning the mountains:

C2630. In the last verse, it was the deceptiveness and relativity of Time that was dealt with. Here we come to the question of space, solidity, bulk.

The question was actually put to the holy Prophet: what will become of the solid Mountains, or in the English phrase, "the eternal hills"?

They are no more substantial than anything else in this temporal world. When the "new world", (13:5) of which Unbelievers doubted, is actually in being, the mountains will cease to exist.

We can imagine the scene of judgment as a level plain, in which there are no ups and downs and no places of concealment. All is straight and level, without comers, mysteries, or lurking doubts.

...فَقُلْ يَنسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا (١٠٥)

say,

"My Lord will uproot them and scatter them as dust;"

C2631. The one word **nasafa** carries the ideas of:

- tearing up by the roots,
- scattering like chaff or dust,
- and winnowing.

Its twofold repetition here intensifies its meaning.

فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا (١٠٦)

106. "He will leave them as plains smooth and level;"

لَا تَرَى فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا (١٠٧)

107. Nothing crooked or curved wilt thou see in their place."

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ ...

108. On that Day will they follow the Caller (straight):

C2632. The Caller: the angel whose voice will call and direct all souls. (R).

... لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ...

no crookedness (can they show) him:

...وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ ...

all sounds shall humble themselves in the presence of (Allah) Most Gracious:

C2633. A beautiful personification of hushed Sound. First there is the loud blast of the Trumpet. Then there is the stillness and hush of awe and reverence: only the tramp of the ranks marching along will be heard. (R).

... فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا (١٠٨)

nothing shalt thou hear but the tramp of their feet (as they march).

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا (١٠٩)

109. On that Day shall no intercession avail except for those for whom permission has been granted by (Allah) Most Gracious and whose word is acceptable to Him.

C2634. Cf. 2:255 in the Verse of the Throne.

Here man is in the accusative case governed by **tanfa'u**, and it is better to construe as I have done. That is, intercession will benefit no one except those for whom Allah has granted permission, and whose word (of repentance) is true and sincere, and therefore acceptable to Allah.

Others construe: no intercession will avail, except by those to whom Allah has granted permission, and whose word (of intercession) is acceptable to Allah.

In that case the two distinct clauses have no distinct meanings.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ...

110. He knows what (appears to His creatures as) before or after or behind them:

C2635. Cf. 2:255 and n. 297.

The slight difference in phraseology (which I have tried to preserve in the Translation) will be understood as a beauty when we reflect that here our attention is directed to the Day of Judgment, and in 2:255 the wording is general, and applies to our present state also.

...وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا (١١٠)

but they shall not compass it with their knowledge.

...وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ

111. (All) faces shall be humbled before (Him) -- the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal:

...وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا (١١١)

hopeless indeed will be the man that carries iniquity (on his back).

C2636. The metaphor of the burden of sin which the unjust carry on their backs is referred to in 20:100-101 (see n. 2626), in 6:31, and in other passages.

Note that all faces, those of the just as well as of the unjust, will be humble before Allah: the best of us can

claim no merit equal to Allah's Grace. But the just will have Hope: while the unjust, now that the curtain of Reality has risen, will be in absolute Despair!

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ...

112. But he who works deeds of righteousness, and has faith,

...فَلَا يَخَافُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا (١١٢)

will have no fear of harm nor of any curtailment (of what is his due).

C2637. See the last note.

Unlike the unjust, the righteous, who have come with Faith, will now find their Faith justified: not only will they be free from any fear of harm, but they will be rewarded to the full, or, as has been said in other passages, where His bounty rather than His justice is emphasised, they will get more than their due reward (3:27; 39:10).

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ...

113. Thus have we sent this down -- an Arabic Qur'án -- and explained therein in detail some of the warnings,

...لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا (١١٣)

in order that they may fear Allah, or that it may cause their remembrance (of Him).

C2638. The Quran is in clear Arabic, so that even an unlearned people like the Arabs might understand and profit by its warnings, and the rest of the world may learn through them, as they did in the first few centuries of Islam and may do again when we Muslims show ourselves worthy to explain and exemplify its meaning.

The evil are warned that they may repent; the good are confirmed in their Faith and strengthened by their remembrance of Him.

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ...

114. High above all is Allah, the King, the Truth!

...وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ...

Be not in haste with the Qur'án before its revelation to thee is completed,

C2639. Allah is above every human event or desire. His purpose is universal. But He is the Truth, the absolute Truth; and His kingdom is the true kingdom, that can carry out its will.

That Truth unfolds itself gradually, as it did in the gradual revelation of the Quran to the holy Prophet. But even after it was completed in a volume, its true meaning and purpose only gradually unfold themselves to any given individual or nation. No one should be impatient about it.

On the contrary, we should always pray for increase in our own knowledge, which can never at any given moment be complete.

...وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا (١١٤)

but say, "O my Lord! advance me in knowledge."

Section 7

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِن قَبْلُ...

115. We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam,

C2640. The spiritual fall of two individual souls, Pharaoh and the Samiri, having been referred to, the one through overweening arrogance, and the other through a spirit of mischief and false harking back to the past,

our attention is now called to the prototype of Evil (Satan) who tempted Adam, the original Man, and to the fact that though man was clearly warned that Satan is his enemy and will only effect his ruin, he showed so little firmness that he succumbed to it at once at the first opportunity.

...فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا (١١٥)

but he forgot: and We found on his part no firm resolve.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى (١١٦)

116. When We said to the angels, "Prostrate yourselves to Adam,"
they prostrated themselves, but not Iblis:
he refused.

فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ...

117. Then We said:
"O Adam! verily, this is an enemy to thee and thy wife:

...فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى (١١٧)

so let him not get you both out of the Garden so that thou art landed in misery.

C2641. See last note.

The story is referred to in order to draw attention to man's folly in rushing into the arms of Satan though he had been clearly forewarned.

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَى (١١٨)

118. "There is therein (enough provision) for thee not to go hungry nor to go naked,

C2642. Not only had the warning been given that Satan is an enemy to man and will effect his destruction, but it was clearly pointed out that all his needs were being met in the Garden of Happiness. Food and clothing, drink and shelter, were amply provided for.

وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَضْحَى (١١٩)

119. "Nor to suffer from thirst, nor from the sun's heat."

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ...

120. But Satan whispered evil to him:

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى (١٢٠)

he said, "O Adam! shall I lead thee to the Tree of **Eternity** and to a kingdom that never decays?"

C2643. The suggestion of Satan is clever, as it always is: it is false, and at the same time plausible.

It is false, because;

- that felicity was not temporary, like the life of this world, and
- they were supreme in the Garden, and a "kingdom" such as was dangled before them would only add to their sorrows.

It was plausible, because;

- nothing had been said to them about Eternity, as the opposite of Eternity was not yet known, and
- the sweets of Power arise from the savour of Self, and Self is an alluring (if false) attraction that misleads the Will.

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا...

121. In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness appeared to them:

C2644. Hitherto they knew no evil. Now, when disobedience to Allah had sullied their soul and torn off the garment, their sullied Self appeared to themselves in all its nakedness and ugliness, and they had to resort to external things (leaves of the Garden) to cover the shame of their self-consciousness..

...وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِن وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ...

they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden:

...وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ (١٢١)

thus did Adam disobey His Lord, and allow himself to be seduced.

C2645. Adam had been given the will to choose, and he chose wrong, and was about to be lost when Allah's Grace came to his aid. His repentance was accepted, and Allah chose him for His Mercy, as stated in the next verse.

ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَى (١٢٢)

122. But his Lord chose him (for His Grace):

He turned to him, and gave him guidance.

قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ...

123. He said: "Get ye down, both of you -- all together, from the Garden, with enmity one to another;

C2646. The little variations between this passage and 2:38 are instructive, as showing how clearly the particular argument is followed in each case.

Here **ihbita** ('get ye down') is in the dual number, and refers to the two individual souls, our common ancestors.

in 2:38 **ihbita** is in the plural number, to include all mankind and Satan, for the argument is about the collective life of man.

On the other hand, "all together" includes Satan, the spirit of evil, and the enmity "one to another" refers to the eternal feud between Man and Satan, between our better and Evil.

...فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى (١٢٣)

but if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance, will not lose his way, nor fall into misery.

C2647. For the same reason as in the last note, we have here the consequences of Guidance to the individual, viz.: being saved from going astray or from falling into misery and despair.

In 2:38, the consequences expressed, though they apply to the individual, are also appropriate taken collectively: "on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنكًا...

124. "But whosoever turns away from My Message, verily for him is a life narrowed down,

...وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى (١٢٤)

and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgment."

C2648. Again, as in the last two verses, there is a variation from the previous passage (2:39).

The consequences of the rejection of Allah's guidance are here expressed more individually: a life narrowed down, and a blindness that will persist beyond this life.

"A life narrowed down" has many implications:

- it is a life from which all the beneficent influences of Allah's wide world are excluded;
- in looking exclusively to the "good things" of this life, it misses the true Reality.

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنتُ بَصِيرًا (١٢٥)

125. He will say: "O my Lord! why hast thou raised me up blind, while I had sight (before)?"

C2649. Because Allah gave him physical sight in this life for trial, he thinks he should be favoured in the real world, the world that matters! He misused his physical sight and made himself blind for the other world.

قَالَ كَذَٰلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيتَهَا...

126. (Allah) will say:

"Thus didst thou, when Our Signs came unto thee, disregard them:

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسَى (١٢٦)

so wilt thou, this day, be disregarded."

C2650. 'You were deliberately blind to Allah's Signs: now you will not see Allah's favours, and will be excluded from His Grace.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ أَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِن بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ...

127. And thus do We recompense him who transgresses beyond bounds and believes not in the Signs of his Lord:

...وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَى (١٢٧)

and the Penalty of the Hereafter is far more grievous and more enduring.

C2651. Blindness in the world of enduring Reality is far worse than physical blindness in the world of probation.

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ...

128. It is not a warning to such men (to call to mind) how many generations before them We destroyed,

...يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسَاكِنِهِمْ...

in whose haunts they (now) move?

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَىٰ (١٢٨)

Verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding.

C2652. Cf. 20:54.

This phrase concluded the argument of Moses with Pharaoh about Pharaoh's blindness to Allah and the Signs of Allah.

Now it concludes the more general argument about men, concerning whom the saying arose: 'none are so blind as those who will not see.'

Section 8

وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا ...

129. Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from thy Lord, (their punishment) must necessarily have come;

C2653. Cf. 10:19 and n. 1407; also 11:110.

In Allah's holy plan and Purpose, there is a wise adjustment of all interests, and a merciful chance and respite given to all, the unjust as well as the just, and His decree or word abides.

The most wicked have a term appointed for them for respite. Had it not been so, the punishment must

necessarily have descended on them immediately for their evil deeds.

... وَأَجَلٌ مُسَمًّى (١٢٩)

but there is a term appointed (for respite).

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا يَقُولُونَ...

130. Therefore be patient with what they say,

C2654. All good men must be patient with what seems to them evil around them. That does not mean that they should sit still and do nothing to destroy evil; for the fight against evil is one of the cardinal points in Islam.

What they are told is that they must not be impatient: they must pray to Allah and commune with Him, so that their patience and faith may be strengthened, and they may be able the better to grapple with evil. For they thus not only get strength but inward spiritual joy..

...وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا...

and celebrate (constantly) the praises of thy Lord before the rising of the sun, and before its setting;

...وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ ...

yea, celebrate them for part of the hours of the night, and at the sides of the day:

C2655. Taraf, plural atraf, may mean sides, ends, extremities.

If the day be compared to a tubular figure standing erect, the top and bottom are clearly marked, but the sides are not so clearly marked: they would be atraf (plural), not *tarafain* (dual).

Now,

- the prayer before sunrise is clearly Fajr;
- that before sunset is Asr:

"part of the hours of the night"

- would indicate Maghrib (early night, just after sunset),
- and Isha, before going to bed.

There is left Zuhr, which is in the indefinite side or middle of the day:

it may be soon after the sun's decline from noon, but there is considerable latitude about the precise hour.

The majority of Commentators interpret in favour of the five Canonical prayers, and some include optional prayers. But I think the words are even more comprehensive.

A good man's life is all one sweet Song of Praise to Allah.

... لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَى (١٣٠)

that thou mayest have (spiritual) joy.

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ...

131. Nor strain thine eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to parties of them,

...زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ...

the splendor of the life of this world, through which We test them:

...وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى (١٣١)

but the provision of thy Lord is better and more enduring.

C2656. The good things of this life make a brave show, but they are as nothing compared with the good of the Hereafter.

Both are provided by Allah. But the former are given to the just and the unjust as a test and trial, and in any case will pass away; while the latter come specially from Allah for His devoted servants, and are incomparably of more value and will last through eternity.

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا...

132. Enjoin prayer on thy people, and be constant therein.

...لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ...

We ask thee not to provide sustenance:

We provide it for thee.

C2657. Sustenance, in the sense of ordinary needs of life, the man of Allah does not worry about. That is provided by Allah for all, the just and the unjust.

But the special provision, the real Sustenance, the spiritual fruit, is for a righteous life in the service of Allah.

...وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى (١٣٢)

But the (fruit of) the Hereafter is for Righteousness.

...وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ

133. They say: "Why does he not bring us a Sign from His Lord?"

C2658. The question or plea of the Unbelievers is disingenuous. Many Signs have come with this Revelation. But the one that should have appealed to those who believed in former revelations and should have convinced them was what was in their own books.

...أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِم بَيِّنَةُ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى (١٣٣)

Has not a clear Sign come to them of all that was in the former Books of revelation?

...وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُم بِعَذَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَقَالُوا

134. And if We had inflicted on them a Penalty before this, they would have said:

C2659. If the Sign mentioned in the last note did not convince them, it would mean that they were not true to their own faith. They were not straight with themselves. In justice they should have been punished for their falsehood. But they were given further respite.

Or they would again have argued in a circle, and said: "If only Allah had sent us a living messenger we should have believed!"

The living messenger they flout because they want a Sign. The Sign they wish to ignore, because they want a living messenger!

رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ مِن قَبْلِ أَن نَّذِلَّ...

وَنَخْزَى (١٣٤)

"Our Lord! if only Thou hadst sent us a Messenger, we should certainly have followed Thy Signs before we were humbled and put to shame."

قُلْ كُلٌّ مُّتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوا...

135. Say:

"Each one (of us), is waiting: wait ye, therefore,

C2660. If people will not be true to their own lights, what further argument is left?

The Prophet of Allah can only say: "Let us wait the issue: my faith tells me that Allah's Truth must prevail."

Cf. 9:52. (R).

فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَى (١٣٥)...

and soon shall ye know who it is that is on the straight and even way, and who it is that has received guidance."

C2661. Cf. 19:43.

The straight and even Way must endure, and show that the man who follows it has received true guidance. All falsehood and crookedness must ultimately disappear.

The Absolute Reality

اقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ

Closer and closer to mankind comes their Reckoning: yet they heed not and they turn away.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Anbiya'

الأنبياء

Introduction and Summary

The last Surah dealt with the individual story (spiritual) of Moses and Aaron, and contrasted it with the growth of evil in individuals like the Pharaoh and the Samiri, and ended with a warning against Evil, and an exhortation to the purification of the soul with prayer and praise.

This Surah begins with the external obstacles placed by Evil against such purification, and gives the assurance of Allah's power to defend men, illustrating this with reference:

- to Abraham's fight against idolatry,
- Lut's fight against injustice and failure to proclaim Allah's glory by making full use of man's God-given faculties and powers,
- that of Job against impatience and want of self-confidence,
- that of Ismail, Idris, and Dhu al Kifl against want of steady perseverance,
- that of Dhu al Nun against hasty anger,
- that of Zakariya against spiritual isolation, and
- that of Mary against the lusts of this world.

In each allusion there is a special point about the soul's purification. The common point is that the Prophets were not, as the vulgar suppose, just irresistible men. They had to win their ground inch by inch against all kinds of resistance from evil.

The chronology of this Surah has no significance. It probably dates from the middle of the Makkan period of inspiration.

Summery- Man treats, as he has always treated, the serious things of life with jest or contempt: but the Judgement must come, and Truth must triumph (21:1-29, and C. 147).

Unity of Design, and certainty of Allah's Promise: Allah's protection and Mercy, and His justice (21:30-50, and C. 148).

How Abraham triumphed over idols, as did others among Allah's chosen ones over various forms of evil (21:51-93, and C. 149).

Work righteousness while it is yet time, for the Judgement will come, and only the righteous will inherit (21:94-112, and C. 150).

C.147 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(21:1-29)

Men may lightly treat Allah's Signs
As jests, but the Judgement must come
Inevitably. His Message is true,
And delivered by Allah's Prophet, as from
Man to men. Truth must triumph
And all false gods and false worship
Must come to naught: for Allah is One,
And His Truth has been one throughout the ages.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ ...

1. Closer and closer to mankind comes their Reckoning:

C2662. Every minute sees them nearer to their doom, and yet they are sadly heedless, and even actively turn away from the Message that would save them.

... وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ (١)

yet they heed not and they turn away.

مَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن ذِكْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِم مُّحْدَثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ (٢)

2. Never comes (aught) to them of a renewed Message from their Lord, but they listen to it as in jest --

C2663. In each age, when the Message of Allah is renewed, the very people who should have known better and welcomed the renewal and the sweeping away of human cobwebs, either receive it with amused self-superiority, which later turns to active hostility, or with careless indifference.

لَاهِيَةً قُلُوبُهُمْ...

3. Their hearts toying as with trifles.

...وَأَسَرُّوا النَّجْوَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ...

The wrongdoers conceal their private counsels, (saying),

C2664. Allah's Message is free and open, in the full light of day. His enemies plot against it in secrecy, lest their own false motives be exposed. Their jealousy prevents them from accepting a "man like themselves" as a teacher or warner or guide.

... هَلْ هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ...

"Is this (one) more than a man like yourselves?

...أَفَتَأْتُونَ السِّحْرَ وَأَنتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ (٣)

Will ye go to witchcraft with your eyes open?"

C2665. Literally, "in a state in which you (actually) see (that it is witchcraft)".

When Allah's Messenger is proved to be above them in moral worth, in true insight, in earnestness and power of eloquence, they accuse him of witchcraft, a word which may mean nothing, or perhaps some mysterious deceitful arts.

.... قَالَ

4. Say:

C2666. Notice that in the usual Arabic texts (that is, according to the *qira'ah of Hafs*) the word **qala** is here and in 21:112 below, as well as in 23:112, spelt differently from the usual spelling of the word in other places (e.g. in 20:125-126).

Qul is the reading of the Basra Qira'ah, meaning, "Say thou" in the imperative. If we construe "he says", the pronoun refers to "this (one)" in the preceding verse, viz.: the Prophet.

But more than one Commentator understands the meaning in the imperative, and I agree with them. The

point is merely one of verbal construction. The meaning is the same in either case.

See n. 2948 to 23:112. (R).

... رَبِّي يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ...

"My Lord knoweth (every) word (spoken) in the heavens and the earth:

C2667. Every word, whether whispered in secret (as in 21:3 above) or spoken openly, is known to Allah. Let not the wrong-doers imagine that their secret plots are secret to the Knower of all things.

...وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٤)

He is the One that heareth and knoweth (all things)."

...بَلْ قَالُواْ أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلاَمٍ

5. "Nay,"

they say, "(these are) medleys of dreams! --

...بَلِ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ...

nay, he forged it! --

nay, he is (but) a poet!

C2668. The charges against Allah's inspired Messenger are heaped up,

"Magic!" says one: that means, "We don't understand it!" Says another, "Oh! but we know! he is a mere dreamer of confused dreams!" If the "dreams" fit in with real things and vital experiences, another will suggest, "Oh yes! why drag in supernatural agencies? he is clever enough to forge it himself!" Or another suggests, "He is a poet! Poets can invent things and say them in beautiful words!" Another interposes, "What we should like to see is miracles, like those we read of in stories of the Prophets of old!"

...فَلْيَأْتِنَا بِآيَةٍ كَمَا أُرْسِلَ الأَوَّلُونَ (٥)

Let him then bring us a Sign like the ones that were sent to (prophets) of old!"

مَا آمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا...

6. (As to those) before them, not one of the populations which We destroyed believed:

...أَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦)

will these believe?

C2669. 'If such miracles as you read of failed to convince Unbelievers of old, what chance is there that these Unbelievers will believe?

Miracles may come, but they are no cures for Unbelief.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ...

7. Before thee, also, the Messengers we sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration:

...فَاسْأَلُواْ أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٧)

if ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the Message.

C2670. See 16:43 and n. 2069.

This answers the Unbelievers' taunt, "he is just a man like ourselves!"

True, but all messengers sent by Allah were men, not angels or another kind of beings, who could not understand men or whom men could not understand.

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَّا يَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ...

8. Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food

...وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ (٨)

nor were they exempt from death.

C2671. As men they were subject to all the laws governing the physical bodies of men. They ate and drank, and their bodies perished in death.

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنَاهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَأَنجَيْنَاهُمْ وَمَن نَّشَاء...

9. In the end We fulfilled to them Our promise, and We saved them and those whom We pleased,

...وَأَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِينَ (٩)

but We destroyed those who transgressed beyond bounds.

C2672. But, however difficult (or impossible) their mission may have appeared to them, or to the world at first, they won through eventually, even those who seemed to have been defeated. Examples are given in the latter part of this Surah, especially in 21:51-93.

They were delivered from the Wrath which overtook the Unbelievers, as were those with them who accepted Allah's Message and placed themselves in conformity with His Will and Plan.

That is the meaning of "whom We pleased."

لَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ...

10. We have revealed for you (O men!) a book in which is a Message for you:

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (١٠)

will ye not then understand?

Section 2

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِن قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً...

11. How many were the populations we utterly destroyed because of their iniquities,

...وَأَنشَأْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ (١١)

setting up in their places other peoples!

فَلَمَّا أَحَسُّوا بَأْسَنَا إِذَا هُم مِّنْهَا يَرْكُضُونَ (١٢)

12. Yet, when they felt Our Punishment (coming), behold, they (tried to) flee from it.

C2673. When they had every chance of repentance and reform, they rejected Allah's Message, and perhaps even put up an open defiance.

When they actually began to feel the Wrath coming, they began to flee, but it was too late! Besides, where could they flee to from the Wrath of Allah?

Hence the ironical appeal to them in the next verse: better go back to your luxuries and what you thought were your permanent homes!

Cf. Christ's saying in the present Gospel of St. Matthew (3:7):

> "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the Wrath to come?"

لَا تَرْكُضُوا وَارْجِعُوا إِلَى مَا أُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيهِ وَمَسَاكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْأَلُونَ (١٣)

13. Flee not, but return to the good things of this life which were given you, and to your homes, in order that ye may be called to account.

C2674. See last note.

'You thought your homes so comfortable: why don't you go back to them? You will be called to account. Perhaps there may be rewards to be given you, who knows?

This irony is itself the beginning of the Punishment. But the ungodly now see how wrong they had been. But their signs and regrets now avail them nothing. It is too late. They are lost, and nothing can save them.

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (١٤)

14. They said: "Ah! woe to us! We were indeed wrongdoers!"

فَمَا زَالَت تِّلْكَ دَعْوَاهُمْ حَتَّى جَعَلْنَاهُمْ حَصِيدًا خَامِدِينَ (١٥)

15. And that cry of theirs ceased not, till We made them as a field that is mown, as ashes silent and quenched.

C2675. The two similes present two different aspects of the lamentation of the ungodly.

When they really see the Wrath to come, there is a stampede, but where can they go to?

Their lamentation is now the only mark of their life. But it dies away, as corn vanishes from a field that is being

mown, or as a dying fire is slowly extinguished! They do not die. They wish they were dead! (78:40).

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ (١٦)

16. Not for (idle) sport did We create the heavens and the earth and all that is between!

C2676. The Hindu doctrine of Lila, that all things were created for sport, is here negatived.

But more: with Allah we must not associate any ideas but those of Truth, Righteousness, Mercy, Justice, and the other attributes implied in His Beautiful Names. He does not jest nor play with His creatures.

لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَن نَّتَّخِذَ لَهْوًا لَّاتَّخَذْنَاهُ مِن لَّدُنَّا إِن كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (١٧)

17. If it had been Our wish to take (just) a pastime, We should surely have taken it from the things nearest to Us, if We would do (such a thing)!

C2677. If such an idea as that of play or pastime had been possible with regard to Allah, and if He had wished really to indulge in pastime, He would have done it with creatures of Light nearest to Him, not with the lowly material creation that we see around us.

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ...

18. Nay, We hurl the Truth against falsehood, and it knocks out its brain, and behold, falsehood doth perish!

...وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُونَ (١٨)

Ah! woe be to you for the (false) things ye ascribe (to Us).

C2678. Such as that;

- Allah has partners (21:22), or
- that He has begotten a son (21:26), or
- has daughters (16:57), or
- any other superstitions derogatory to the dignity and glory of Allah.

وَلَهُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

19. To Him belong all (creatures) in the heavens and on earth:

...وَمَنْ عِندَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ (١٩)

even those who are in His (very) Presence are not too proud to serve Him,

nor are they (ever) weary (of His service):

C2679. The pure angelic hosts, whom we imagine to be glorious creatures of light, high in Heavens, near the Throne of Allah Himself, are yet His creatures, and serve Him without ceasing, and are proud to do so.

Such is the majesty of Allah Most High.

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ (٢٠)

20. They celebrate His praises night and day,

nor do they ever flag or intermit.

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا آلِهَةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ ...

21. Or have they taken (for worship) gods from the earth

C2680. The different kinds of false gods whom people raise from their imagination are now referred to.

In verses 21-23, the reference is to the gods of the earth, whether idols or local godlings, or deified heroes, or animals or trees or forces of the nature around us, which men have from time to time worshipped. These, as deities, have no life except what their worshippers give to them.

هُمْ يُنشِرُونَ (٢١) ...

who can raise (the dead)?

C2681. The answer of course is "no".

No one but Allah can raise the dead to life.

The miracle in the story of Jesus (3:49 and 5:113) was "by Allah's leave". It was a miracle of Allah, not one of Jesus by his own power or will.

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا...

22. If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both!

C2682. After the false gods of the earth (verse 21), are mentioned the false gods in the heavens and the earth, like those in the Greek Pantheon (verse 22), who quarreled and fought and slandered each other and made their Olympus a perfect bear-garden!

...فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ ...

But glory to Allah, the Lord of the Throne:

... عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (٢٢)

(high is He) above what they attribute to Him!

لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ (٢٣)

23. He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs).

C2683. Allah is Self-Subsisting. All His creatures are responsible to Him and dependent on Him there is no other being to whom He can be responsible or on whom He can be dependent.

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ آلِهَةً...

24. Or have they taken for worship (other) gods besides Him?

C2684. See above. n. 2682, where two kinds of false worship are noted.

Now we are warned against a third danger, the worship of false gods of any sort. Pagan man is prolific of creating abstract images for worship, including Self or abstract Intelligence or Power.

In verse 26 below is mentioned a fourth kind of false worship, which imagines that Allah begets sons or daughters.

...قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ...

Say, "Bring your convincing proof:

...هَذَا ذِكْرُ مَن مَّعِيَ وَذِكْرُ مَن قَبْلِي...

this is the Message of those with me and the Message of those before me."

C2685. This verse should be read with the next.

All reason revolts against the idea of conflicting gods, and points to Unity in Creation and Unity in Godhead. This is not only the Message of Islam ("those with me") but the message of all prophets who came before the holy Prophet Muhammad ("those before me"), and the line of prophets was closed with him.

The Message given to every prophet in all ages was that of Unity as the fundamental basis of Order and Design in the world, material, moral, and spiritual.

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْحَقَّ فَهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ (٢٤)

But most of them know not the Truth, and so turn away.

...وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ

25. Not a Messenger did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him:

...لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ (٢٥)

that there is no god but I;

therefore worship and serve Me.

...وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَلَدًا

26. And they say: "(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten offspring."

C2686. This refers both to the Trinitarian superstition that Allah has begotten a son, and to the Arab superstition that the angels were daughters of Allah. All such superstitions are derogatory to the glory of Allah.

The prophets and the angels are no more than servants of Allah: they are raised high in honour, and therefore they deserve our highest respect, but not our worship.

...سُبْحَانَهُ...

Glory to Him!

...بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ (٢٦)

they are (but) servants raised to honor.

... لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ

27. They speak not before He speaks,

C2687. They never say anything before they receive Allah's command to say it, and their acts are similarly conditioned.

This is also the teaching of Jesus as reported in the Gospel of St. John (12:49-50):

> "For I have not spoken of myself: but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

If rightly understood, "Father" has the same meaning as our "Rabb", Sustainer and Cherisher, not Begetter or Progenitor.

... وَهُم بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٧)

and they act (in all things) by His command.

...يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ

28. He knows what is before them, and what is behind them,

...وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَى...

and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable,

C2688. Cf. 20:109. Those who have conformed to the Will of Allah and obeyed His Law, thus winning the stamp of His approval.

...وَهُم مِّنْ خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ (٢٨)

and they stand in awe and reverence of His (glory).

C2689. They: the usual interpretation refers the pronoun to the servants of Allah who intercede:

it may also refer to those on whose behalf intercession is made: they do not take it as a matter of course, but stand in due awe and reverence of Allah's great glory and mercy.

...وَمَن يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَٰهٌ مِّن دُونِهِ فَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ

29. If any of them should say, "I am a god besides Him,"

such a god We should reward with Hell:

...كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٩)

thus do We reward those who do wrong.

C.148 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(21:30-50)

Look at Allah's Creation: contemplate

Its unity of Design and benevolence

Of Purpose. Death must come to all,

But life and faith are not objects of ridicule.

Truth will outlast all mockery: 'tis Allah

Who calls, because he cares for you,

And on His Judgement Seat will weigh

Each act, each thought, each motive, great

Or small, with perfect justice. Come,

Ye all, reject not His blessed Message.

Section 3

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا...

30. Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of Creation), before We clove them asunder?

C2690. The evolution of the ordered worlds as we see them is hinted at.

As man's intellectual gaze over the physical world expands, he sees more and more how Unity is the dominating note in Allah's wonderful Universe.

Taking the solar system alone, we know that the maximum intensity of sun-spots corresponds with the maximum intensity of magnetic storms on this earth. The universal law of gravitation seems to bind all mass together. Physical facts point to the throwing off of planets from vast quantities of diffused nebular matter, of which the central condensed core is a sun.

...وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ...

We made from water every living thing.

C2691. About 72 per cent, of the surface of our Globe is still covered with water, and it has been estimated that if the inequalities on the surface were all leveled, the whole surface would be under water, as the mean elevation of land sphere-level would be 7,000-10,000 feet below the surface of the ocean.

This shows the predominance of water on our Globe. That all life began in the water is also a conclusion to which our latest knowledge in biological science points. Apart from the fact that protoplasm, the original basis of living matter, is liquid or semi-liquid and in a state of constant flux and instability, there is the fact that land animals, like the higher vertebrates, including man, show, in their embryological history, organs like those of fishes, indicating the watery origin of their original habitat. The constitution of protoplasm is about 80 to 85 per cent of water.

أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣٠)...

Will they not then believe?

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ...

31. And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with them,

C2692. Cf. 16:15 and n. 2038.

Lest it should shake with them: here "them" refers back to "they" at the end of the preceding verse, meaning "Unbelievers".

It might be mankind in general, but the pointed address to those who do not realise and understand Allah's mercies is appropriate, to drive home to them the fact that it is Allah's well-ordered providence that protects them normally from cataclysms like earthquakes, but that they could for their iniquities be destroyed in an instant, as the 'Ad and the Thamud were destroyed before them.

As pointed out in n. 2691 above, if the surface of the earth were leveled up, it would all be under water, and therefore the firm mountains are a further source of security of life which has evolved in terrestrial forms.

Though the mountains may seem impassable barriers, yet Allah's providence has provided broad passes between them to afford highways for human communications.

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ (٣١)...

and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive guidance.

C2693. In both the literal and the figurative sense. Literally these natural mountain highways direct men in the way they should go. Figuratively, these wonderful instances of Allah's providence should turn men's thoughts to the true guidance of Allah in life and spiritual progress.

وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَّحْفُوظًا...

32. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well-guarded:

C2694. Canopy well guarded: the heavens form a canopy that is secure from falling down: they also form a sublime spectacle and a Mystery that man can only faintly reach.

Cf. also 15:17.

...وَهُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهَا مُعْرِضُونَ (٣٢)

Yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)!

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

33. It is He Who created the Night and the Day, and the sun and the moon:

...كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (٣٣)

all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course.

C2695. 1 have indicated, unlike most translators, the metaphor of swimming implied in the original words: how beautiful it is to contemplate the heavenly bodies swimming through space (or ether) in their rounded courses before our gaze!

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ...

34. We granted not to any man before thee permanent life (here):

C2696. Life on this planet without death has not been granted to any man. The taunt of the Unbelievers at the holy Prophet was therefore futile.

Could any of them live without death at some time or other?

Could they name any one who did?

...أَفَإِن مِّتَّ فَهُمُ الْخَالِدُونَ (٣٤)

if then thou shouldst die, would they live permanently?

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ...

35. Every soul shall have a taste of death:

C2697. Cf. 3:185. and n. 491.

The soul does not die, but when it separates from the body at the death of the body, the soul gets a taste of death.

In our life of probation on this earth, our virtue and faith are tested by many things: some are tested by calamities, and some by the good things of this life. If we prove our true mettle, we pass our probation with success.

In any case all must return to Allah, and then will our life be appraised at its true value.

...وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً...

and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial:

...وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٥)

to Us must ye return.

...وَإِذَا رَآكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِن يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا

36. When the Unbelievers see thee, they treat thee not except with ridicule.

...أَهَٰذَا الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ ...

"Is this," (they say), "the one who talks of your gods?"

C2698. To the godly man the issue between false worship and true worship is a very serious matter.

To the skeptics and unbelievers it is only a joke. They take it lightly, and laugh at the godly man. They not only laugh at him, but they blaspheme when the name of the One True God is mentioned.

The reply to this is in the next verse.

...وَهُم بِذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٣٦)

And they blaspheme at the mention of (Allah) Most Gracious!

خُلِقَ الْإِنسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ...

37. Man is a creature of haste:

C2699. Haste is in the very bone and marrow of man. If he is granted respite for his own sake, in order that he may have a further chance of repentance and coming back to Allah, he says impatiently and incredulously:

"Bring on the Punishment quickly, that I may see if what you say is true!"

Alas, it is too true! When the Punishment actually comes near and he sees it, he will not want it hastened. He will want more time and further delay! Poor creature of haste!

سَأُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ (٣٧)...

soon (enough) will I show you My Signs: then ye will not ask Me to hasten them!

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣٨)

38. They say: "When will this promise come to pass, if ye are telling the truth?"

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا حِينَ لَا يَكُفُّونَ عَن وُجُوهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَن ظُهُورِهِمْ...

39. If only the Unbelievers knew (the time) when they will not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces, nor yet from their backs,

C2700. They would not be so unreasonable if they only realized the terrible future for them! The Fire will envelop them on all sides, and no help will then be possible.

Is it not best for them now to turn and repent?

The Punishment may come too suddenly, as is said in the next verse.

وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٣٩)...

and (when) no help can reach them!

بَلْ تَأْتِيهِم بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ...

40. Nay, it may come to them all of a sudden and confound them:

...فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (٤٠)

no power will they have then to avert it,

nor will they (then) get respite.

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ...

41. Mocked were (many) Messengers before thee;

...فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (٤١)

but their scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked.

C2701. The same verse occurs at 6:10, where see n. 843.

'What they are mocking at now will be in a position to mock them in due time.'

Section 4

قُلْ مَن يَكْلَؤُكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ...

42. Say,

"Who can keep you safe by night and by day from (the Wrath of) (Allah) Most Gracious?"

C2702. 'Allah is most Gracious: if, in spite of His great mercy, you are so rebellious and depraved as to incur His Wrath, who is there who can save you?

His Wrath can descend on you at any time, by night or by day.'

...بَلْ هُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِم مُّعْرِضُونَ (٤٢)

Yet they turn away from the mention of their Lord.

أَمْ لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُم مِّن دُونِنَا ۚ لَا...

43. Or have they gods that can guard them from Us?

...يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُم مِّنَّا يُصْحَبُونَ (٤٣)

They have no power to aid themselves,

nor can they be defended from Us.

C2703. Ashaba: to join as companion: with 'an or min it has also the meaning of to defend or remove from someone.

The full signification can only be got by a long paraphrase: 'they are not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with Us, nor can they be defended from Us.'

بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ...

44. Nay,

We gave the good things of this life to these men and their fathers until the period grew long for them;

C2704. 'Umr or 'Umur: age, generation, period, time, life.

Here "period" is most appropriate, as it covers many generations, "these men and their fathers."

...أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ...

see they not that we gradually reduce the land (in their control) from its outlying borders?

C2705. Cf. 13:41 and n. 1865.

The particular signification is that Islam spread from the outer borders, social and geographical, gradually inwards.

The social fringe was the humbler people, such as slaves and poor men.

The geographical reference is to Madinah and tribes away from the Makkah centre. The proud and unbelieving Quraish were the last to come in when the circle was gradually drawn tighter and tighter around them.

The general signification applies to all times. Allah's Truth makes its way first among the poor and the lowly, those whose minds are unsoiled by prejudices of false pride or false knowledge, but it gradually hems in the obstinate, until it prevails in the end.

...أَفَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ (٤٤)

Is it then they who will win?

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُنذِرُكُم بِالْوَحْيِ...

45. Say, "I do but warn you according to revelation":

...وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ (٤٥)

but the deaf will not hear the call, (even) when they are warned!

C2706. According to the English saying. "none is so deaf as those who will not hear".

When they deliberately shut their ears to warning from the Merciful Allah, meant for their own good, the responsibility is their own. But their cowardice is shown in the next verse by their behaviour when the first breath of the Wrath reaches them.

وَلَئِن مَّسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ...

46. If but a breath of the Wrath of thy Lord do touch them, they will then say,

...يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٤٦)

"Woe to us! we did wrong indeed!"

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا...

47. We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least.

...وَإِن كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا...

And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account):

C2707. Not the smallest action, word, thought, motive, or predilection but must come into the account of Allah.

Cf. Browning (in Rabbi Ben Ezra):

> "But all, the world's coarse thumb And finger failed to plumb, So passed in making up the main account; All instincts immature. All purposes unsure. That weighed not as his work, yet swelled

the man's account; Thoughts hardly to be packed Into a narrow act. Fancies that broke through language and escaped; All I could never be, All, men ignored in me, This, I was worth to God, Whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ (٤٧)...

and enough are We to take account.

C2708. The literalism of Sale has here excelled itself: he translates, "and there will be sufficient accountants with us"!

What is meant is that when Allah takes account, His accounting will be perfect: there will be no flaw in it, as there may be in earthly accountants, who require other people's help in some matters of account which they do not understand for want of knowledge of that particular department they are dealing with.

Allah's knowledge is perfect, and therefore His justice will be perfect also; for He will not fail to take into account all the most intangible things that determine conduct and character. See last note.

There is no contradiction between this and 18:104-105, where it is said that men of vain works, i.e., shallow hypocritical deeds, will have no weight attached to their deeds, In fact the two correspond.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاء وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٨)

48. In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion (for judgment), and a Light and a Message for those who would do right --

C2709. Cf. 2:53 and n. 68, where the meaning of **Furqan** is discussed. Here three things are mentioned as given to Moses and Aaron:

1. **The Criterion for judgment:** this might well be the wonderful Proofs they saw of Allah's goodness and glory from which they could have no doubt as to Allah's will and command;

2. **the Light;** this was the inner enlightenment of their soul, such as comes from inspiration: and

3. **the Message,** the Book, the original Book of Moses, which Aaron as his lieutenant would also use as a guide for his people.

الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُم مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ (٤٩)

49. Those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts,
and who hold the Hour (of Judgment) in awe.

C2710. Note the three kinds of fear mentioned in 21:48-49.

- Taqwa is the fear of running counter to the will of Allah; it is akin to the love of Him; for we fear to offend those we love; it results in right conduct, and those who entertain it are "those who would do right".

- Then there is Khayat, the fear of Allah, lest the person who entertains it may be found, in his inmost thoughts, to be short of the standard which Allah wishes for him; this is also righteous but in a less high degree than Taqwa which is akin to love.

- And thirdly, there is the fear of consequences on the Day of Judgment (ishfaq); this also may lead to righteousness, but is on a still lower plane. Perhaps the three correspond to the Criterion, the Light, and the Message (or Warning) of the last verse.

وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبَارَكٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ...

50. And this is a blessed Message which We have sent down:

...أَفَأَنتُمْ لَهُ مُنكِرُونَ (٥٠)

will ye then reject it?

C2711. Here is a Prophet and a Book, greater than Moses and his Book. Are you going to reject him and it? (R).

C.149 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(21:51-93)

The great examples of virtue conquered
Evil, each according to his circumstances:
Abraham stood staunch in the fire
Of persecution, unhurt: Lut was bold
In reproving abominations; Noah survived
The Flood by his faith, in a world of Unbelief:
David sought justice, and sang Allah's praises;
Solomon by wisdom subdued the refractory;
Job was patient in suffering; Ismail,
Idris, and Dhu al Kifl were true in constancy
Amid temptation; Jonah turned to Allah
After a short misunderstanding; Zakariya
And his family were exemplars of devoutness;
And Mary of chastity. All men and women
Of God form one united Brotherhood.

Section 5

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِن قَبْلُ ...

51. We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his rectitude of conduct,

C2712. Rushd: right conduct, corresponding in action to the quality expressed in the epithet Hanif (sound or true in Faith) applied to Abraham in 2:135 and elsewhere.

... وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَالِمِينَ (٥١)

and well were We acquainted with him.

C2713. Hence Abraham's title "Friend of Allah" (Khalil-ullah): 4:125.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ ...

52. Behold! he said to his father and his people,

C2714. Reference is made to Abraham in many places. In 19:42-49 it was with reference to his relations to his father: the problem was how a righteous man should deal with his father, when his duty to his father conflicts with his duty to Allah.

Here the problem is: how a righteous man should deal with evil and overcome it; how he should fight against evil, and if he is subjected to the fire of persecution, how his firmness draws Allah's Mercy, and the very troubles he is placed in become his comfort and joy.

... مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ (٥٢)

"What are these images, to which ye are (so assiduously) devoted?"

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءنَا لَهَا عَابِدِينَ (٥٣)

53. They said, "We found our father worshipping them."

قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنتُمْ أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٥٤)

54. He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error-ye and your fathers."

قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ (٥٥)

55. They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest?"

C2715. Abraham looked at life with a serious eye, and his people took it light-heartedly. He was devoted to Truth, and they cared more for ancestral custom, In the conflict he seemed to be in their power. But he was fearless, and he triumphed by Allah's Grace.

قَالَ بَل رَّبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ...

56. He said, "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He Who created them (from nothing):

C2716. For the various words for "creation" see n. 120 to 2:117, where fatara is explained and differentiated from other words of similar meaning.

وَأَنَا عَلَى ذَٰلِكُم مِّنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٥٦)...

and I am a witness to this (truth).

وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُم بَعْدَ أَن تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ (٥٧)

57. And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols after ye go away and turn your backs"...

C2717. He wants to convince them of the powerlessness of their idols. But he does not do it underhand. He tells them that he is going to do something when once they are gone and their backs are turned to the idols,-as much as to say that the idols are dependent on their care and attention. Apparently the people are amused and want to see what he does. So they leave him to his own devices.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَاذًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَّهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ (٥٨)

58. So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it.

C2718. He was enacting a scene, to make the people ashamed of worshipping senseless stocks and stones. He left the biggest idol untouched and broke the others to pieces, as if a fight had taken place between the idols, and the biggest had smashed the others. Would they turn to the surviving idol and ask him how it all happened?

قَالُوا مَن فَعَلَ هَٰذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥٩)

59. They said,

"Who has done this to our gods?

He must indeed be some man of impiety!"

قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ (٦٠)

60. They said,

"We heard a youth talk of them: he is called Abraham."

C2719. Different groups of people are speaking. Those who were not present at Abraham's speech in verse 57 ask, "who has done this?"

Those who were, at once name him, whereupon a formal council of the people was held, and Abraham was arraigned.

قَالُوا فَأْتُوا بِهِ عَلَى أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ (٦١)

61. They said, "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness:"

قَالُوا أَأَنتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (٦٢)

62. They said, "Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?"

C2720. They asked him the formal question. There was no mystery about it. He had already openly threatened to do something to the idols, and people who had heard his threats were there. He now continues his ironic taunt to the idol-worshippers.

'You ask me! Why don't you ask the idols?

Doesn't it look as if this big fellow has smashed the smaller ones in a quarrel?'

If they do not ask the idols, they confess that the idols have not intelligence enough to answer! This argument is developed in verses 64-67.

Note that while the false worshippers laughed at his earnestness, he pays them out by a grim practical joke, which at the same time advances the cause of Truth.

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِن كَانُوا يَنطِقُونَ (٦٣)

63. He said:

"Nay, this was done by -- this is their biggest one! Ask them, if they can speak intelligently!"

فَرَجَعُوا إِلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٦٤)

64. So they turned to themselves and said, "Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!"

C2721. Abraham's biting irony cut them to the quick.

What could they say?

They turned to each other. Some among them thought he had the best of the argument. They were not keen on idolatry, and they told their fellows that it was useless arguing with Abraham. They all hung their heads in shame. But presently they thought they would face out Abraham, and take his words literally.

They said, "You know quite well that idols do not speak!"

This was precisely what Abraham wanted them to say, and he delivered his final blow!

See n. 2723 below.

ثُمَّ نُكِسُوا عَلَى رُؤُوسِهِمْ ...

65. Then were they confounded with shame: (they said),

C2722. Literally, "they were turned down on their heads" which may suggest a metaphorical somersault, i.e., they recovered from their dawning shame for idolatry and were prepared to argue it out with the youth Abraham.

But I think there is better authority for the interpretation I have adopted.

لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنطِقُونَ (٦٥) ...

"Thou knowest full well that these (idols) do not speak!"

قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ (٦٦)

66. (Abraham) said,

"Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm?

أُفٍّ لَّكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

67. "Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah!

C2723. As soon as they admitted in so many words that the idols could not speak, Abraham delivered his final attack:

'Then why do you worship useless impotent creatures?'

After that, there remains nothing but the argument of violence, which they proceed to exercise, being the party in power. 'Burn him at the stake' is an easy cry!

But it was not Abraham that suffered: it was his persecutors (21:70).

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٧)

have ye no sense?"...

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (٦٨)

68. They said, "Burn him and protect your gods, if ye do (anything at all)!"

... قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا

69. We said, "O fire! be thou cool,

C2724. The nature of fire, by all the physical laws of matter, is to be hot. The supremacy of mind over matter is a phrase much used, but the supremacy of the spiritual over the material is not so commonly understood. And yet it is the greatest factor in the estimate of Reality. The material is ephemeral and relative. The spiritual is eternal and absolute. Through all the fire of persecution and hatred Abraham remained unhurt. The fire became cool, and a means of safety for Abraham.

... وَسَلَامًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٦٩)

and (a means of)) safety for Abraham!"

C2725. Can we form any idea of the place where he passed through the furnace, and the stage in his career at which this happened?

He was born in Ur of the Chaldees, a place on the lower reaches of the Euphrates, not a hundred miles from the Persian Gulf. This was the cradle, or one of the cradles, of human civilisation. Astronomy was studied here in very ancient times, and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars was the prevailing form of religion.

Abraham revolted against this quite early in life, and his argument is referred to in 6:74-82.

They also had idols in their temples, probably idols representing heavenly bodies and celestial winged creatures. He was still a youth (21:60) when he broke the idols. This was stage No. 2.

After this he was marked down as a rebel and persecuted. Perhaps some years passed before the incident of his being thrown into the Fire (21:68-69) took place.

Traditionally the Fire incident is referred to a king called Nimrud, about whom see n. 1565 to 11:69. If Nimrud's capital was in Assyria, near Nineveh (site near modern Mosul), we may suppose either that the king's rule extended over the whole of Mesopotamia, or that Abraham wandered north through Babylonia to Assyria.

Various stratagems were devised to get rid of him (21:70), but he was saved by the mercy of Allah.

The final break came when he was probably a man of mature age and could speak to his father with some authority. This incident is referred to in 19:41-48.

He now left his ancestral lands, and avoiding the Syrian desert, came to the fertile lands of Aram or Syria, and so south to Canaan, when the incident of 11:69-76 took place.

It is some years after this that we may suppose he built the Ka'bah with Isma'il (2:124-29), and his prayer in 14:35-41 may be referred to the same time.

His visit to Egypt (Gen. 12:10) is not referred to in the Quran

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ (٧٠)

70. Then they sought a stratagem against him:
but We made them the ones that lost most!

C2726. As they could not get rid of him by open punishment, they tried secret plans, but were foiled throughout. It was not he that lost, but they.

On the contrary he left them and prospered and became the progenitor of great peoples.

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ (٧١)

71. But We delivered him and (his nephew) Lut (and directed them) to the land which We have blessed for the nations.

C2727. The land of Aram or Syria, which in its widest connotation includes Canaan or Palestine. Syria is a well-watered fertile land, with a Mediterranean sea-coast, on which the famous commercial cities of Tyre and Sidon were situated. Its population is very mixed, as it has been a bone of contention between all the great kingdoms and empires of Western Asia and Egypt, and European interest in it dates from the most ancient times. (R).

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً...

72. And We bestowed on him Isaac and, as an additional gift, (a grandson), Jacob,

C2728. Nafilat has many meanings:

- booty;
- extra work or prayer;
- extra or additional gift;
- grandson.

The two last significations are implied here. Not only was Abraham given a son in his old age; he was given not only Isaac, but several sons, the chief being Isma'il and Isaac, who both joined in burying him (Gen. 25:9); and he also saw grandsons. Isma'il is specially mentioned later (21:85) apart from Isaac's line, on account of his special importance for Islam.

...وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ (٧٢)

and We made righteous men of every one (of them).

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا...

73. And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command,

...وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ...

and We sent them inspiration

= to do good deeds,

- to establish regular prayers, and

- to practice regular charity;

...وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ (٧٣)

and they constantly served Us (and Us only).

C2729. The spiritual lesson from this passage may be recapitulated. The righteous man makes no compromise with evil. If the votaries of evil laugh at him he pays them in their own coin, but he stands firmly by his principles.

His firmness causes some confusion among the followers of evil, and he openly declares the faith that is in him. They try, openly and secretly, to injure or kill him, but Allah protects him, while evil perishes from its own excesses.

وَلُوطًا آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا...

74. And to Lut, too, we gave Judgment and Knowledge,

...وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْخَبَائِثَ...

and We saved him from the town which practiced abominations:

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاسِقِينَ (٧٤)

truly they were a people given to Evil, a rebellious people.

C2730. Lut's people were given to unspeakable abominations. His mission was to preach to them. He withstood Evil, but they rejected him. They were punished, but he and his followers were saved.

See 15:61-74; 11:77-82; and 7:80-84.

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٧٥)

75. And We admitted him to Our Mercy: for he was one of the Righteous.

Section 6

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَى مِن قَبْلُ...

76. (Remember) Noah, when he cried (to Us) aforetime:

C2730a. The date of Noah was many centuries before that of Abraham. (R).

...فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٦)

We listened to his (prayer) and delivered him and his family from great distress.

C2731. The contemporaries of Noah were given to Unbelief, oppression of the poor, and vain disputations. He carried Allah's Message to them, and standing fast in faith, built the Ark, in which he was saved with his followers from the Flood, while the wicked were drowned.

See 11:25-48.

وَنَصَرْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا...

77. We helped him against people who rejected Our Signs:

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٧٧)

truly they were a people given to Evil: so We drowned them (in the Flood) all together.

وَدَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ...

78. And remember David and Solomon, when they gave judgment in the matter of the field

...إِذْ نَفَشَتْ فِيهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شَاهِدِينَ (٧٨)

into which the sheep of certain people had strayed by night:

We did witness their judgment.

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ...

79. To Solomon We inspired the (right) understanding of the matter:

C2732. The sheep, on account of the negligence of the shepherd, got into a cultivated field (or vineyard) by

night and ate up the young plants or their tender shoots, causing damage, to the extent of perhaps a whole year's crop.

David was king, and in his seat of judgment he considered the matter so serious that he awarded the owner of the field the sheep themselves in compensation for his damage. The Roman law of the Twelve Tables might have approved of this decision, and on the same principle was built up the Deodand doctrine of English Law, now obsolete.

His son Solomon, a mere boy of eleven, thought of a better decision, where the penalty would better fit the offence. The loss was the loss of the fruits or produce of the field of vineyard: the corpus of the property was not lost. Solomon's suggestion was that the owner of the field or vineyard should not take the sheep altogether but only detain them long enough to recoup his actual damage, from the milk, wool, and possibly young of the sheep, and then return the sheep to the shepherd.

David's merit was that he accepted the suggestion, even though it came from a little boy:

Solomon's merit was that he distinguished between corpus and income, and though a boy, was not ashamed to put his case before his father.

But in either case it was Allah Who inspired the true realisation of justice. He was present and witnessed the affair, as He is present everywhere.

...وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا...

to each (of them) We gave Judgment and Knowledge;

...وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُودَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ...

it was Our power that made the hills and the birds celebrate Our praises with David:

C2733. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth celebrates the praises of Allah: 17:44; 57:1; 16:48-50.

Even the "thunder repeateth His praises": 13:13.

All nature ever sings the praises of Allah. David sang in his Psalms, 148:7-10: "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye ... mountains and all hills; ... creeping things and flying fowl!" All nature sings to Allah's glory, in unison with David, and angels, and men of God.

Cf. 34:10 and 38:18-19. (R).

...وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (٧٩)

it was We Who did (these things).

...وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُم مِّن بَأْسِكُمْ

80. It was We Who taught him the making of coats of mail for your benefit, to guard you from each others violence:

C2734. The making of coats of mails is attributed to David.

It is defensive armour, and therefore its discovery and supply is associated with deeds of righteousness in 34:10-11, in contrast with the deadly weapons which man invents for offensive purposes.

Indeed, all fighting, unless in defence of righteousness, is mere "violence."

...فَهَلْ أَنتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ (٨٠)

will ye then be grateful?

C2735. David's good work then was:

- he was open to learn wisdom wherever it came from;
- he sang the praises of Allah, in unison with all nature;
- he made defensive armour.

But all these things he did, because of the faculties which Allah had given him, and we must be grateful for this and for all things to Allah.

... وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ

81. (It was Our power that made) the violent (unruly) wind flow (tamely) for Solomon, to his order,

C2736. Cf. 34:12, and 38:36-38,

This has been interpreted to mean that Solomon had miraculous power over the winds, and he could make them obey his order.

Rationalists say that he had naval power on the Mediterranean, and through the Gulf of 'Aqabah on the Red Sea, and that he therefore figuratively commanded the winds, and we may say the same of airmen at the present day.

In any case the power behind was, and is, from Allah, Who has granted man intelligence and the faculties by which he can tame the more unruly forces of nature.

... إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا...

to the land which We had blessed:

C2737. Evidently Palestine, in which was Solomon's capital, though his influence extended for north in Syria, and perhaps far south in Arabia and Ethiopia.

In the Roman ruins of Baalbek, fifty miles north of Damascus, is still shown a quarry of huge stones supposed to have been cut for Solomon. I have seen them with my own eyes. this local tradition is interesting, even if invented.

...وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمِينَ (٨١)

for We do know all things.

وَمِنَ الشَّيَاطِينِ مَن يَغُوصُونَ لَهُ وَيَعْمَلُونَ عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ...

82. And of the evil ones, were some who dived for him, and did other work besides;

C2738. As in n. 2736, the literalists and the rationalists take different views.

- The former say that Solomon had power over supernatural being of evil, whom he compelled to dive for pearls and do other hard tasks.
- Rationalists refer this to hostile unruly races whom he subjected to his sway.

It was Allah's power ultimately, Who granted him wisdom. Solomon tamed the Jinns with Wisdom.

...وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حَافِظِينَ (٨٢)

and it was We Who guarded them.

...وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ

83. And (remember) Job when he cried to his Lord,

...أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (٨٣)

"Truly distress has seized me, but Thou art the Most Merciful of those that are merciful."

C2739. Job (Ayub) was a prosperous man, with faith in Allah, living somewhere in the north-east comer of Arabia.

He suffers from a number of calamities:

- his cattle are destroyed,
- his servants slain by the sword,
- and his family crushed under his roof.

But he holds fast to his faith in Allah.

As a further calamity he is covered with loathsome sores from head to foot. He loses his peace of mind, and he curses the day he was born. His false friends come and attribute his afflictions to sin.

These "Job's comforters" are no comforters at all, and he further loses his balance of mind, but Allah recalls to him all His mercies, and he resumes his humility and gives up self-justification.

He is restored to prosperity, with twice as much as he had before; his brethren and friends come back to him; he had a new family of seven sons and three fair daughters. He lived to a good old age, and saw four generations of descendants.

All this is recorded in the Book of Job in the Old Testament.

Of all the Hebrew writings, the Hebrew of this Book comes nearest to Arabic. The account given in the Biblical sources and the image that it projects of Prophet Job is decidedly different from that found in the Quran and the Hadith, which present him as a prophet and brilliant example of dignified patience becoming of a great Prophet of Allah ever trustful in Him and His promises.

Nothing could be farther from truth than saying that he lost his peace of mind or resorted to curses during the period of his trial. (R).

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِن ضُرٍّ...

84. So We listened to him:

We removed the distress that was on him,

...وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِنَا وَذِكْرَى لِلْعَابِدِينَ (٨٤)

and We restored his people to him, and doubled their number -- as a Grace from Ourselves,

and a thing for commemoration, for all who serve Us.

C2740. Job is the pattern of humility, patience, and faith in Allah. It was with these weapons that he fought and conquered evil.

... وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ

85. And (remember) Isma'il,

C2741. Isma'il is mentioned specially, apart from the line which descended through Isaac (21:72), as he was the founder of a separate and greater Ummah.

His sufferings began in infancy (see n. 160 to 2:158); but his steady constancy and submission to the will of Allah were specially shown when he earned the title of "Sacrifice to Allah" (see n. 2506 to 19:54). That was the particular quality of his constancy and patience.

... وَإِدْرِيسَ ...

Idris,

C2742. For Idris see n. 2508 to 19:56.

He was in a high station in life, but that did not spoil him. He was sincere and true, and that was the particular quality of his constancy and patience,

... وَذَا الْكِفْلِ...

and Dhu al Kifl,

C2743. Dhu al Kifl would literally mean "possessor of, or giving, a double requital or portion"; or else, "one who used a cloak of double thickness," that being one of the meanings of Kifl.

The Commentators differ in opinion as to who is meant, why the title is applied to him, and the point of his being grouped with Isma'il and Idris for constancy and patience.

> I think the best suggestion is that afforded by Karsten Niebuhr in his Reisebeschreibung nach Arabian, Copenhagen, 1778, ii. 264-266, as quoted in the Encyclopaedia of Islam under "Dhul-Kifl".
>
> He visited Meshad 'All in 'Iraq, and also the little town called Kefil, midway between Najaf and Hilla (Babylon). Kefil, he says, is the Arabic form of Ezekiel. The shrine of Ezekiel was there, and the Jews came to it on pilgrimage.
>
> If we accept "Dhul al Kifl" to be not an epithet, but an Arabicised form of "Ezekiel", it fits the context, Ezekiel was a prophet in Israel who was carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar after his second attack on Jerusalem (about B.C. 599). His Book is included in the English Bible (Old Testament). He was chained and bound, and put into prison, and for a time he was dumb (Ezekiel, 3:25-26).
>
> He bore all with patience and constancy, and continued to reprove boldly the evils in Israel.
>
> In a burning passage he denounces false leaders in words which are eternally true: "Woe be to the

shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken ..... etc. (Ezekiel, 34:2-4).

Dhu al Kifl is again mentioned in 38:48 along with Isma'il and Elisha.

...كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٨٥)

all (men) of constancy and patience;

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُم مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٨٦)

86. We admitted them to Our Mercy: for they were of the Righteous ones.

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَن لَّن نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ...

87. And remember Dhu al Nun, when he departed in wrath: he imagined that We had no power over him!

C2744. Dhu al Nun. "the man of the Fish or the Whale", is the title of Jonah (Yunus), because he was swallowed by a large Fish or Whale.

He was the prophet raised to warn the Assyrian capital Nineveh. For Nineveh see n. 1478 to 10:98.

His story is told in 37:139-149. When his first warning was unheeded by the people, he denounced Allah's wrath on them. But they repented and Allah forgave them for the time being.

Jonah, meanwhile, departed in wrath, discouraged at the apparent failure of his mission. He should have remained in the most discouraging circumstances, and relied on the power of Allah; for Allah had power both over Nineveh and over the Messenger He had sent to Nineveh. He went away to the sea and took a ship, but apparently the sailors threw him out as a man of bad omen in a storm.

He was swallowed by a big Fish (or Whale), but in the depth of the darkness, he cried to Allah and confessed his weakness.

...فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ...

But he cried through the depths of darkness,

The **"darkness"** may be interpreted both physically and spiritually;

- physically, as the darkness of the night and the storm and the Fish's body;
- spiritually as the darkness in his soul, his extreme distress in the situation which he had brought on himself.

Allah Most Gracious forgave him. He was cast out ashore; he was given the shelter of a plant in his state of mental and physical lassitude. He was refreshed and strengthened, and the work of his mission prospered. Thus he overcame all his disappointment by repentance and Faith, and Allah accepted him.

أَن لَّا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٨٧)

"There is no god but Thou: Glory to Thee:
I was indeed wrong!"

...فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ

88. So We listened to him: and delivered him from distress:

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُنجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨٨)

and thus do We deliver those who have faith.

... وَزَكَرِيَّا إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ

89. And (remember) Zakariya, when he cried to his Lord:

C2745. See 19:2-15, and 3:38-41.

Zakariya was a priest; both he and his wife were devout and punctilious in their duties. They were old, and they had no son. He was troubled in mind, not so much by the vulgar desire to have a son to carry on his line, but because he felt that his people were not unselfishly devout, and there would be no sincere work for Allah unless he could train up someone himself.

He was given a son Yahya (John the Baptist), who added to the devout reputation of the family, for he is called "noble, chaste, and a prophet," (3:39). All three, father, mother, and son, were made worthy of each other, and they repelled evil by their devout emulation in virtue.

... رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا...

"O my Lord! leave me not without offspring,

...وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ (٨٩)

though Thou art the best of inheritors.

C2746. 'It is not that I crave a personal heir to myself: all things go back to Thee, and Thou art the best of inheritors: but I see no one around me sincere enough to carry on my work for Thee; wilt Thou give me one whom I can train?'

...فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَى وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ

90. So We listened to him: and We granted him Yahya:
We cured his wife's (barrenness) for him.

C2747. Aslaha: to improve to mend, to reform, to make better. Here, with reference to Zakariya's wife, the signification is twofold:

1. that her barrenness would be removed, so that she could become a mother; and
2. her spiritual dignity should be raised in becoming the mother of John the Baptist; and by implication his also, in becoming the father of John.

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا...

These three were ever quick in emulation in good works:

they used to call on Us with love and reverence,

...وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ (٩٠)

and humble themselves before Us.

... وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا

91. And (remember) her who guarded her chastity:

C2748. Mary the mother of Jesus.

Chastity was her special virtue: with a son of virgin birth, she and Jesus became a miracle to all nations. That was the virtue with which they (both Mary and Jesus) resisted evil.

... فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِن رُّوحِنَا...

We breathed into her of Our Spirit,

...وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٩١)

and We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples.

... إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً

92. Verily, this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood,

C2749. **Ummah:** this is best translated by Brotherhood here.

"Community", "race", and "nation." and "people" are words which import other ideas and do not quite correspond to "Ummah".

"Religion" and "Way of Life" are derived meanings, which could be used in other passages, but are less appropriate here.

Our attention has been drawn to people of very different temperaments and virtues, widely different in time, race, language, surroundings, history, and work to be performed, but forming the closest brotherhood as being men and women united in the highest service of Allah.

They prefigure the final and perfected Brotherhood of Islam.

... وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ (٩٢)

and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other).

...وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ

93. But (later generations) cut off their affair (of unity), one from another:

C2750. Allah's Message was and ever is one; and His Messengers treated it as one. It is people of narrower views who come later and trade on the earlier names, that break up the Message and the Brotherhood into jarring camps and sects.

...كُلٌّ إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ (٩٣)

(yet) will they all return to Us.

C.150 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(21:94-112)

No good deed is fruitless; work
While yet there's time; for with Judgement
The door will be closed to repentance.
No false gods of fancy can help.
The Righteous will have no fear; for them
The angelic greetings will truly open
A new world, which they will inherit.
This was Allah's Message of old, and the same
Is Allah's Message renewed; for Allah
Is one, and so is His Message, proclaimed
For all, freely and in loving Truth.

Section 7

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ...

94. Whoever works any act of righteousness and has Faith -- his endeavour will not be rejected:

...وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ (٩٤)

We shall record it in his favor.

C2751. Allah gives credit for every act of righteousness, however small: when combined with sincere Faith in Allah, it becomes the stepping stone to higher and higher things. It is never lost.

وَحَرَامٌ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٩٥)

95. But there is a ban on any population which We have destroyed:

that they shall not return.

C2752. But when wickedness comes to such a pass that the Wrath of Allah descends, as it did on Sodom, the case becomes hopeless.

The righteous were warned and delivered before the Wrath descended. But those destroyed will not get another chance, as they flouted all previous chances. They will only be raised at the approach of the Day of Judgment.

حَتَّى إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ ...

96. Until the Gog and Magog (people) are let through (their barrier),

C2753. For Gog and Magog see n. 2439 to 18:94.

The name stands for wild and lawless tribes who will break their barriers and swarm through the earth. This will be one of the prognostications of the approaching Judgment.

... وَهُم مِّن كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنسِلُونَ (٩٦)

and they swiftly swarm from every hill.

وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ أَبْصَارُ...

97. Then will the True Promise draw nigh (of fulfillment):

then behold! the eyes of the Unbelievers will fixedly stare in horror:

C2754. Cf. 14:42.

...الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا...

"Ah! woe to us! we were indeed heedless of this;

...بَلْ كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٩٧)

nay, we truly did wrong!"

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ...

98. Verily ye, (Unbelievers), and the (false) gods that ye worship besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell!

...أَنتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ (٩٨)

To it will ye (surely) come!

لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ آلِهَةً مَّا وَرَدُوهَا...

99. If these had been gods, they would not have got there!

C2755. The ultimate proof of Truth and Falsehood will be that Truth will endure and come to its own, while Falsehood will be destroyed.

And so the men who worshipped Truth will come to their own, while those who worshipped Falsehood will be in a Fire of Punishment they could scarcely have imagined before. In that state there will be nothing but regrets and sighs and groans, and these evil sounds will drown everything else.

...وَكُلٌّ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٩٩)

But each one will abide therein.

لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (١٠٠)

100. There, sobbing will be their lot, nor will they there hear (aught else).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُم مِّنَّا الْحُسْنَى أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ (١٠١)

101. Those for whom the Good (Record) from Us has gone before, will be removed far therefrom.

C2756. In contrast to the misery of those who rejected Truth and Right, will be the happiness of those who accepted it.

The good will not hear the least sound of the groans of evil. Their true soul's desires will be fulfilled-not temporarily as in this world, but in a permanent form.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا...

102. Not the slightest sound will they hear of Hell:

...وَهُمْ فِي مَا اشْتَهَتْ أَنفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ (١٠٢)

what their souls desired, in that will they dwell.

لَا يَحْزُنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ...

103. The Great Terror will bring them no grief: but the angels will meet them (with mutual greetings):

C2757. The Judgment and balancing of accounts will be a mighty Terror to the evil-doers.

But it will cause, to the righteous, not grief or anxiety, but hope and happiness, for now they will be in a congenial atmosphere, and will see the fulfilment of their ideals in the meeting and greeting of the angels, preparatory to their enjoyment of the supreme Bliss-seeing the Face of Allah.

...هَٰذَا يَوْمُكُمُ الَّذِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (١٠٣)

"This is your Day -- (the Day) that ye were promised."

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ...

104. The Day that we roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books (completed) --

...كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُّعِيدُهُ...

even as We produced the first Creation, so shall We produce a new one:

C2758. The world-the universe-as we know it, will be folded up like a scroll of parchment, for it will have done its work.

If Allah created all this world out of nothing, He can create an entirely new heaven and a new earth, on a plane of which we can form no conception in our present life.

And He will do so, for that is His promise.

Some Commentators understand **Sijill** to be the name of the Recording Angel who closes the Book of a man Deeds after the man's death.

...وَعْدًا عَلَيْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (١٠٤)

a promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfil it.

... وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ

105. Before this We wrote in the Psalms,

C2759. Zabur: the Book of the Psalms of David.

The name of David is expressly mentioned in connection with the Zabur in 4:163 and 17:55, although there the indefinite article is applied to the word as meaning a Book of Scripture.

See Psalms 25:13, "his seed shall inherit the earth";

37:11, "the meek shall inherit the earth" (quoted by Jesus in Matt. 5:3); and

37:29, "the righteous shall inherit the land." (R).

... مِن بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ...

after the Message (given to Moses):

C2760. The same promise occurs in the Pentateuch, Exod. 32:13.

"they shall inherit it (the land) forever."

...أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ (١٠٥)

My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth."

إِنَّ فِي هَٰذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِّقَوْمٍ عَابِدِينَ (١٠٦)

106. Verily in the (Qur'án) is a Message for people who would (truly) worship Allah.

C2761. The culmination of Allah's Revelation is in the Quran, which confirms previous scriptures, corrects the errors which men introduced into them, and explains many points in detail for all who seek for right worship and service to Allah-whether they inherit the previous Books ("People of the Book") or not. It is a universal Message.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٧)

107. We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures.

C2762. There is no question now of race or nation, of a "chosen people" or the "seed of Abraham"; or the "seed of David"; or of Hindu Arya-varta; of Jew or Gentile, Arab or 'Ajam (non-Arab), Turk or Tajik, European or Asiatic, White or Coloured; Aryan, Semitic, Mongolian, or African; or American, Australian, or Polynesian.

To all men and creatures other than men who have any spiritual responsibility, the principles universally apply.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

108. Say:

"What has come to me by inspiration is that your Allah is One Allah:

...فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (١٠٨)

will ye therefore bow to His Will (in Islam)?"

C2763. 'Not my God only, but also your God; for there is but One God, the Universal Lord, Who made and loves and cherishes all.'

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ آذَنتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ...

109. But if they turn back, say:

"I have proclaimed the Message to you all alike and in truth;

...وَإِنْ أَدْرِي أَقَرِيبٌ أَم بَعِيدٌ مَّا تُوعَدُونَ (١٠٩)

but I know not whether that which ye are promised is near or far.

C2764. 'If you do not realise the significance of the Message, I at least have done my duty. I have given the Good News for the Righteous and the Warning for the Unjust, without favour or partiality, and without abating one jot of the truth, openly and squarely for all.

Do not ask me when the Good News and the Warning will be fulfilled. That is for Allah to decide, not for me or for you to know.'

إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُونَ (١١٠)

110. "It is He Who knows what is open in speech and what ye hide (in your hearts).

C2765. The Messenger of Allah freely and impartially teaches all how to carry out Allah's Will and live a good life.

If some of them are hypocrites and come into the Ummah (Brotherhood) from baser motives and not the pure motives of the love of Allah, their motives and conduct will be judged by Allah and not by men.

وَإِنْ أَدْرِي لَعَلَّهُ فِتْنَةٌ لَّكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ (١١١)

111. "I know not but that it may be a trial for you, and a grant of (worldly) livelihood (to you) for a time.

C2766. In the same way if men who come into the Brotherhood from pure motives and yet feel aggrieved that those outside are better off from a worldly point of view, they are wrong.

It may be that the fleeting enjoyment of this world's goods is but a trial, and they should be grateful for being saved from temptation.

قَالَ ...

112. Say:

C2767. See above, n. 2666 to 21:4.

The better reading is "Say" in the imperative, rather than "He (the Prophet) said (or says)" in the indicative mood.

Note that, on that construction, there are three distinct things which the Prophet is asked to say: viz.:

1. the statement in verses 109-111, addressed to those who turn away from the Message;
2. the prayer addressed to Allah in the first part of verse 112; and
3. the advice given indirectly to the Believers, in the second part of verse 112 I have marked these divisions by means of inverted commas.

... رَبِّ احْكُم بِالْحَقِّ...

"O my Lord! judge Thou in truth!"

C2768. That is, Allah's judgment as between the Teacher and those who refuse his Message, or between the righteous and those who taunt them for their poverty, will be the true one, and both the Teacher and the Ummah must leave the judgment to Allah.

...وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ (١١٢)

"Our Lord Most Gracious is the One Whose assistance should be sought against the blasphemies ye utter!"

C2769. Blasphemy is a dreadful sin. We must guard ourselves from it.

But as regards others, if we cannot prevent it, we must pray to Allah for assistance and not rely upon carnal weapons.

The Absolute Reality

مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

No just estimate have they made of Allah: for Allah is He Who is strong and able to carry out His Will.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Hajj

الْحَجِّ

Introduction and Summary

We now come to a new series of four Surahs, dealing with the environments and methods contributing to our spiritual progress, as the last five Surahs dealt with the Messengers who came in various ways to proclaim the Truth and conquer evil. See Introduction to Surah 17.

The subject matter of this particular Surah is concerned mainly with the spiritual implications of the Sacred House, the Pilgrimage, the Sacrifice, Striving and Fighting in defence of Truth when attacked, and other acts that make for Unselfishness and uproot Falsehood.

On the chronology of this Surah, opinion is divided. Some parts were probably revealed in the latter Makkan period, and some in Madinah. But the chronological question has no significance here.

Summery- Importance of the spiritual Future, and need of firmness in Faith: help for Truth and punishment for Evil (22:1-25, and C. 151).

Purity, Prayer, Humility, and Faith are implied in the Pilgrimage; in solemn Sacrifice we express our gratitude and reverence to Allah, and our desire to share food with our poorer brethren; Striving and Fighting in defence of Truth when attacked are necessary as tests of self-sacrifice (22:26-48, and C. 152).

The promptings of Evil may hinder the work of Allah's Prophet, but that work must triumph, and the Mercy and Truth of Allah must be established; therefore serve Allah humbly, and He will protect and help you (22:49-78, and C. 153).

C.151 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(22:1-25)

Will not mankind take warning
From the dreadful consequences of Evil
Clearly proclaimed to them? Will they
Dispute about Allah and the Life of the Future?
They have only to look around and within them,
And they will see vestiges of the Plan
And Purpose of Allah. Let them not halt
Between Good and Evil: Allah's Message as well
As his Messenger must win against all
Obstacles. Only the evil will be brought
To shame and agony. The good-whose speech
Is pure and conduct worthy of praise-
Will have a meed of refinement, beauty, and bliss.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ...

1. O mankind!

   fear your Lord!

إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ (١)...

For the convulsion of the Hour (of Judgment) will be a thing terrible!

C2770. The serious issues involved are indicated by showing how terrible the consequences will be for those who disobey Allah's Will.

The terror will only be for those who rebel and disobey: the righteous will not suffer from it, but on the contrary will be greeted by angels with joy (21:103).

يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ...

2. The Day ye shall see it, every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe,

وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا ...وَ...

and every pregnant female shall drop her load (unformed):

وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَى...وَ...

thou shalt see mankind as in a drunken riot,

C2771. Three metaphors are used for the extreme terror which the Awful Day will inspire,

1. No mother abandons the baby at her breast in the greatest danger; yet that will happen in this Dreadful Hour.
2. An expectant mother carries the young life within her with great pride and hope: yet the terror will overpower the hope at this "Hour", and nature's working will be reversed,

3. Men ordinarily retain their self-possession except under intoxication: here, without intoxication, they will be driven to frenzy with terror.

...وَمَا هُم بِسُكَارَى وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ (٢)

yet not drunk:

but dreadful will be the Wrath of Allah.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

3. And yet among men there are such as dispute about Allah, without knowledge,

...وَيَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّرِيدٍ (٣)

and follow every evil one obstinate in rebellion!

كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ مَن تَوَلَّاهُ فَأَنَّهُ يُضِلُّهُ وَيَهْدِيهِ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (٤)

4. About the (Evil One) it is decreed that whoever turns to him for friendship, him will he lead astray, and he will guide him to the Penalty of the Fire.

C2772. Even after the warnings there are men who are such fools as to turn away from Allah who created them and cherishes them with His love and care; they become outlaws in His Kingdom, making friends with Satan, which is a rebel in Allah's Kingdom.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ...

5. O mankind!

if ye have a doubt about the Resurrection,

C2773. If they really have doubts in their minds about the life after death, they have only to turn their attention either to their own nature, or to the nature around.

How wonderful is their own physical growth, from lifeless matter, to seed, fertilised ovum, foetus, child youth, age, and death!

How can they doubt that the Author of all these wonderful stages in their life here can also give them another kind of life after the end of this life?

Or, if they look at external nature, they see the earth dead and barren and Allah's fertilising showers bring it in to life, growth and beauty in various forms.

The Creator of this great pageant of Beauty can surely create yet another and a newer world.

...فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ... ...

(consider) that We created you out of dust,

...ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ... ...

then out of sperm,

...ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ...

then out of a leech-like clot,

...ثُمَّ مِن مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ...

then out a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (Our Power) to you;

C2774. The stages of man's physical growth from nothing till he completes the cycle of this life are described in words whose accuracy, beauty, and comprehensiveness can only be fully understood by biologists.

Parallel to the physical growth, may be understood man's inner growth, also by stages and by Allah's creative artistry.

...وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term,

C2775. That is,

- a male or a female child,
- a fair or an ugly child,
- a good or a rebellious child, etc,

involving countless mysteries of genetics and heredity.

...ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ...

then do We bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that ye may reach your age of full strength;

...وَمِنكُم مَّن يُتَوَفَّى...

and some of you are called to die,

...وَمِنكُم مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا...

and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much).

C2776. Cf. 16:70.

In that passage the mystery of our life was used to illustrate Allah abundant mercies and favours to us.

Here it is used to illustrate Allah's power in giving us a future Life of even greater promise.

...وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً...

And (further), thou seest the earth barren and lifeless,

...فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاء اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنبَتَتْ مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ (٥)

but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs).

C2777. A beautiful nature passage so pregnant in meaning that the earnest student wonders what magic and truth have been conveyed in so few words.

M. Pickthall's Egyptian colleague Prof. Ghamrawi (see M. Pickthall's note on this passage) was but expressing the feelings of every careful student of the Quran.

The "subtlety and wealth of meaning" are indeed marvellous.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ...

6. This is so, because Allah is the Reality:

...وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَأَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٦)

it is He Who gives life to the dead,

and it is He Who has power over all things.

C2778. All these beautiful and well-articulated pageants of life and nature point to the Reality behind them i.e. Allah.

They will perish, but He is eternal. They are but shadows; the substance (if such a word may be used) is in Him. They are shifting and illusory, in the sense that they have neither permanency or independent existence. But they have a sort of secondary reality in the sense in which a shadow is a real reflection from substance. No Power or Existence has any meaning except as a reflection of Allah's ineffable Glory.

وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهَا...

7. And verily the Hour will come: there can be no doubt about it,

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَن فِي الْقُبُورِ (٧)

or about (the fact) that Allah will raise up all who are in the graves.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنِيرٍ (٨)

8. Yet there is among men such a one as disputes about Allah, without knowledge, without guidance, and without a Book of Enlightenment --

C2779. For **"Book of Enlightenment-** see 3:184 and n. 490.

1 understand **"knowledge-** to mean here their human knowledge or intelligence, -guidance" to mean divine guidance, such as comes from Allah or prophets of Allah or a revelation from Allah, and the **"Book of Enlightenment-** to mean the fundamental guide to good conduct, the clear rules laid down in all Dispensations to help men to lead good lives.

The **"Book of Enlightenment"** may mean a revealed Book in which case "Guidance" would refer to divine guidance through a prophet of Allah. (R).

ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

9. (Disdainfully) bending his side, in order to (lead men) astray from the Path of Allah;

لَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ...

for him there is disgrace in this life,

C2780. Some Commentators think this refers to Abu Jahl, but the words are perfectly general, and this type of man is common in all ages.

The same may be said about verse 3 above:

Commentators give the immediate reference to one Nadhar ibn Harith.

وَنُذِيقُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ (٩)...

and on the Day of Judgment we shall make him taste the Penalty of burning (Fire).

ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاكَ...

10. (It will be said):

"This is because of the deeds which thy hands sent forth,

وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ (١٠)...

for verily Allah is not unjust to His servants."

C2781. 'What you suffer is the consequence of your own sinful deeds; Allah is just; He is not unjust in the least to any of His creatures'. (R).

Section 2

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرْفٍ...

11. There are among men some who serve Allah, as it were, on the verge:

C2782. They are men whose minds are not firm: they will have faith, if all goes well with them, but as soon as they are tried, they are found wanting.

They are a different kind from hypocrites. It is not fraud or double dealing that is their sin: it is a weak mind, petty standards of judging right by success, a selfishness that gives nothing but asks for all, a narrow-mindedness that does not go beyond petty mundane calculations- a "nicely calculated less or more" of the good things of this world.

They fail in both worlds, and their failure in this world is patent for every on-looker.

...فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ...

if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content;

...وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ...

but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces:

...خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ (١١)

they lose both this world and the Hereafter:

that is loss for all to see!

...يَدْعُو مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُ وَمَا لَا يَنفَعُهُ...

12. They call on such deities, besides Allah, as can neither hurt nor profit them:

C2783. To such minds religion does not mean high endeavour, self-sacrifice for noble ends, the recognition of Allah's infinite world, but just a small concession to formalism, perhaps a present to an idol (literal or figurative), perhaps attendance at worship if it can be done without trouble!

It is false gods they worship, and the more they worship, the more they stray.

...ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ (١٢)

that is straying far indeed (from the Way)!

...يَدْعُو لَمَن ضَرُّهُ أَقْرَبُ مِن نَّفْعِهِ...

13. (Perhaps) they call on one whose hurt is nearer than his profit:

C2784. Such false worship is not always neutral, bringing neither harm nor good.

Perhaps the harm comes first, and there is no help from Allah. Such minds are themselves demoralised, and render themselves unfit for help!

...لَبِئْسَ الْمَوْلَى وَلَبِئْسَ الْعَشِيرُ (١٣)

evil, indeed, is the patron, and evil the companion (for help)!

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

14. Verily Allah will admit those who believe and work righteous deeds,

...جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

to Gardens, beneath which rivers flow:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ (١٤)

for Allah carries out all that He plans.

C2785. Allah is both true to His promise, and He has power to give full effect to His Will and Plan.

...مَن كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَن لَّن يَنصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

15. If **any** think that Allah **will not help him** (His Messenger) in this world and the Hereafter,

...فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لِيَقْطَعْ...

let him stretch out a rope to the ceiling and cut (himself) off:

C2786. There is some difference of opinion as to the interpretation of this verse.

Most Commentators are agreed that the pronoun "him" in the second line ("will not help him") refers to the holy Prophet, and that the "any" in the first line refers to his enemies, who wished to see him destroyed and removed from the scene of his labours.

Ibn Abbas, whom I have followed here, and whom a great number of Commentators follow, construes the later clauses in the sense given in the text. Freely paraphrased, it means-.

if the enemies of Allah's Messenger are enraged at his successes, let them fix a rope to their ceiling and hang themselves.

Samaa is thus rendered by the word "ceiling".

If Samaa is rendered by the word "heaven" (the usual meaning), the paraphrase would be:

if the enemies of Allah's Messenger are enraged at the help he gets from heavens, let them stretch a rope to heavens, and see if they can cut off the help in that way! -in other words, they are fools if they think they can intercept Allah's help by their petty devices!

...فَلْيَنظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهُ مَا يَغِيظُ (١٥)

then let him see whether his plan will remove that which enrages (him)!

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنزَلْنَاهُ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ

16. Thus have We sent down Clear Signs;

C2787. Instead of plotting against Allah's Messenger, the unbelievers should observe the Clear Signs which he has brought, and obey and follow the Guidance which comes from Allah according to the Laws which He has fixed by His holy Will and Plan.

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يُرِيدُ (١٦)

and verily Allah doth guide whom He will!

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ

17. Those who believe (in the Qur'án), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians,

C2788. For **Sabians**, see n. 76 to 2:62.

They are also referred to in 5:69.

In both those passages the Muslims are mentioned with the Jews, Christians, and Sabians, as receiving Allah's protection and mercy.

Here, besides the four religions, there is further mention of Magians and Polytheists: it is not said that they would receive Allah's Mercy, but only that Allah will judge between the various forms of faith. (R).

... وَالنَّصَارَى وَالْمَجُوسَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا...

Christians, Magians, and Polytheists --

C2789. This is the only place where the **Magians** (Majas) are mentioned in the Quran.

Their cult is a very ancient one. They consider Fire as the purest and noblest element, and worship it as a fit emblem of Allah. Their location was the Persian and Median uplands and the Mesopotamian valleys, their religion was reformed by Zardusht (date uncertain, about B.C. 600?). Their scripture is the Zend-Avesta, the bible of the Parsis. They were "the Wise men of the East" mentioned in the Gospels. (R).

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (١٧)

for Allah is witness of all things.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ

وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ ...

18. Seest thou not that to Allah bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth -- the sun, the moon, the stars;

C2790. Cf. 21:79, and n. 2733.

All created things, animate and inanimate, depend on Allah for their existence, and this dependence can be construed as their Sajdah or bowing down in worship.

Their very existence proclaims their dependence. How can they be objects of worship?

...وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَابُّ...

the hills, the trees, the animals;

...وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ...

and a great number among mankind?

...وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ...

But a great number are (also) such as are fit for Punishment:

For **haqqa** in this verse. Cf. 15:64, n. 1990.

...وَمَن يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن مُّكْرِمٍ...

and such as Allah shall disgrace -- none can rise to honor:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ (١٨)

for Allah carries out all that He wills.

C2791. Cf. 22:16. There the argument was that those who work in harmony with Allah's Law and Will will get their reward, for Allah always carries out His Plan.

Here is the Parallel argument: those who defy Allah's Will must suffer pain and disgrace, for Allah is well able to carry out His Will.

هَذَانِ خَصْمَانِ اخْتَصَمُوا فِي رَبِّهِمْ...

19. These two antagonists dispute with each other about their Lord:

C2792. Two antagonists: i.e., parties of antagonists, viz.,

- Men of Faith, who confess their Lord and seek to carry out His Will,
- and Men who deny their Lord and defy His Will.

...فَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قُطِّعَتْ لَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ مِّن نَّارٍ...

but those who deny (their Lord) -- for them will be cut out a garment of Fire:

...يُصَبُّ مِن فَوْقِ رُؤُوسِهِمُ الْحَمِيمُ (١٩)

over their heads will be poured out boiling water.

يُصْهَرُ بِهِ مَا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ وَالْجُلُودُ (٢٠)

20. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as (their) skins.

C2793. The punishment, will be all-pervading, not merely superficial.

وَلَهُم مَّقَامِعُ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ (٢١)

21. In addition there will be maces of iron (to punish) them.

C2794. Read this with the next verse.

There will be no escape from the final Punishment adjudged after the time of repentance is past.

كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا...

22. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said),

...وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ (٢٢)

"Taste ye the Penalty of Burning!"

Section 3

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

23. Allah will admit those who believe and work righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow:

C2795. In 22:14 above, was described the meed of the Righteous as compared with the time-servers and those who worshipped false gods (Verses. 10-13):

here we have the case of those who were Persecuted, abused, prevented from entering the Ka'bah and deprived of all that makes life smooth, agreeable, and comfortable. For them the meed is described in a way that negative these afflictions:

- costly adornments (as against being stripped of home and property),
- purity of speech (as against the abuse they received),
- the Path of the Lord of Praise (as against the fierce and malignant persecution to which they were subjected).

...يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِن ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا ...

they shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls;

...وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ (٢٣)

and their garments there will be of silk.

...وَهُدُوا إِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ

24. For they have been guided (in this life) to the purest of speeches;

...وَهُدُوا إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْحَمِيدِ (٢٤)

they have been guided to the Path of Him Who is worthy of (all) praise.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ

25. As to those who have rejected (Allah), and would keep back (men) from the Way of Allah, and from the Sacred Mosque,

...الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً الْعَاكِفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ ...

which We have made (open) to (all) men -- equal is the dweller there and the visitor from the country --

...وَمَن يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِإِلْحَادٍ بِظُلْمٍ نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٥)

and any whose purpose therein is profanity or **wrongdoing** -- them will We cause to taste of a most grievous Penalty.

C2796. All these were enormities of which the Pagan clique in power in Makkah before and during the Hijrah.

C.152 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(22:26-48)

For our spiritual growth are provided
Symbols and means of expression in our ordinary
Lives. Such is the pilgrimage, meant
To gather men and women from far and near
To share in sacrifice, and prayer and praise.
In an age-old centre of worship. The sacrifices
Too, are symbols of Piety of Heart,
A longing to share with fellow-men
In the bounties of Allah. In the Fight for Truth
Is tested our purity of motives, unselfishness
Of aim, and devotion to Right at the coat
Of Self. Fearless must we fight; for Truth
Has often been flouted, but must finally win.

Section 4

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ...

26. Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House, (saying):

C2797. The site of Makkah was granted to Abraham (and his son Ismail) for a place of worship that was to be pure (without idols, the worship being paid to Allah, the One True God) and universal, without being reserved (like Solomon's Temple of later times) to any one People or Race. (R).

...أَن لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ

السُّجُودِ (٢٦)

"Associate not any thing (in worship) with Me;
and sanctify My House for

- those who compass it round,
- or stand up,
- or bow,
- or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer).

C2798. Cf. 2:125.

Note that here the word **qaimin** ('who stand up for prayer') occurs in place of 'akifin (who use it as a retreat).

In practice the meaning is the same. Those who go for a retreat to the Ka'bah stay there for the time being.

وَأَذِّن فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا ...

27. "And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot

... وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِن كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ (٢٧)

and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways;

C2799. When the Pilgrimage was proclaimed, people came to it for every quarter, near and far, on foot and mounted.

The **"lean camel"** coming after a fatiguing journey through distant mountain roads typifies the difficulties of travel, which Pilgrims disregard on account of the temporal and spiritual benefits referred to in the next verse.

لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ...

28. "That they may witness the benefits (provided) for them,

C2800. There are benefits both for this our material life and for our spiritual life.

- Of the former kind are those associated with social intercourse which furthers trade and increases knowledge.
- Of the latter kind are the opportunities of realising some of our spiritual yearnings in sacred associations that go back to the most ancient times.

Of both kinds may be considered the opportunities which the Pilgrimage provides for strengthening our international Brotherhood.

...وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ ...

and celebrate the name of Allah, through the Days appointed,

C2801. The three special days of Hajj are the 8th, 9th, and 10th of the month of Dhu al Hijjah, and the two or three subsequent days of Tashriq:

see the rites explained in n. 217 to 2:197.

But we may ordinarily include the first ten days of Dhu al Hijjah in the term.

... عَلَى مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ...

over the cattle which He has provided for them (for sacrifice):

C2802. The great day of commemorative Sacrifice ('Id al Adha) is the 10th of Dhu al Hijjah: the meat then killed is meant to be eaten for food and distributed to the poor and needy. (R).

...فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ (٢٨)

then eat ye thereof and feed the distressed ones in want.

... ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ

29. "Then let them complete the rites prescribed for them,

C2803. Tafath- the superfluous growth on one's body, such as nails, hair, etc., which it is not permitted to remove in Ihram.

These may be removed on the 10th day, when the Hajj is completed: that is the rite of completion.

... وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ...

perform their vows,

C2804. The Pilgrimage is completed by the performance of these rites.

The Pilgrim should carry in mind the purification he gained in performing his pilgrimage. Then comes the final Tawaf.

...وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ (٢٩)

and (again) circumambulate the Ancient House."

...ذَٰلِكَ

30. Such (is the Pilgrimage):

...وَمَن يُعَظِّمْ حُرُمَاتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ عِندَ رَبِّهِ...

whoever honors the sacred rites of Allah, for him it is good in the sight of his Lord.

...وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ...

Lawful to you (for food in pilgrimage) are cattle except those mentioned to you (as exceptions):

C2805. The general food prohibitions will be found in 2:173 , 5:4-5, and 6:121, 138-146.

They are meant for health and cleanliness, but the worst abominations to shun are those of false worship and false speech.

Here the question is about food during Pilgrimage. Lawful meat but not game is allowed.

...فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ...

but shun the abomination of idols,

...وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ (٣٠)

and shun the word that is false --

...حُنَفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ...

31. Being true in faith to Allah, and never assigning partners to Him:

...وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ...

if anyone assigns partners to Allah, he is as if he had fallen from heaven and been snatched up by birds,

...أَوْ تَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ (٣١)

or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a far-distant place.

C2806. A parable full of meaning. The man who falls from the worship of Allah, The One True God, is like a man who falls from heaven, His being taken up with false objects of worship is like the failing man being picked up in the air by birds of prey. But the false objects of worship cannot hold him permanently in their grip.

A fierce blast of wind- the Wrath of Allah- comes and snatches him away and throws him into a place far, far away from any place he could have imagined-into the hell of those who defied Allah. (R).

...ذَٰلِكَ

32. Such (is his state):

...وَمَن يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ ...

and whoever holds in honor the Symbols of Allah, (in the sacrifice of animals),

C2807. Sha'air, symbols, signs, marks by which something is known to belong to some particular body of men, such as flags.

In 2:158 the word was applied to Safa and Marwa: see n. 160 there.

Here it seems to be applied to the rites of sacrifice. Such sacrifice is symbolical: it should betoken dedication and piety of heart.

See below, 22:37.

... فَإِنَّهَا مِن تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ (٣٢)

such (honor) should come truly from piety of heart.

...لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى

33. In them ye have benefits for a term appointed:

C2808. In them: in cattle, or animals offered for sacrifice.

It is quite true that they are useful in many ways to man, e.g., camels in desert countries are useful as mounts or for carrying burdens, or for giving milk, and so for horses and oxen: and camels and oxen are also good for meat, and camel's hair can be woven into cloth; goats and sheep also yield milk and meat, and hair or wool. But if they are used for sacrifice, they become symbols by which men show that they are willing to give up some of their own benefits for the sake of satisfying the needs of their poorer brethren.

...ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ (٣٣)

in the end their place of sacrifice is near the Ancient House.

C2809. Ila: towards, near.

The actual sacrifice is not performed in the Ka'bah, but at Mina, five or six miles off, where the Pilgrims encamp:

see n. 217 to 2:197.

Thumma: then, finally, in the end; i.e., after all the rites have been performed, Tawaf, Safa and Marwa, and 'Arafat.

Section 5

...وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنسَكًا

34. To every people did We appoint rites (of sacrifice),

...لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ...

that they might celebrate the name of Allah over the sustenance He gave them from animals (fit for food),

C2810. This is the true end of sacrifice, not propitiation of higher powers, for Allah is One, and He does not delight in flesh or blood (22:37), but a symbol of thanksgiving to Allah by sharing meat with fellow-men.

The solemn pronouncement of Allah's name over the sacrifice is an essential part of the rite.

...فَإِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا...

but your Allah is one Allah:

submit then your wills to Him (in Islam)

...وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ (٣٤)

and give thou the Good News to those who humble themselves --

C2811. The good news: i.e. the Message of Allah, that He will accept in us the sacrifice of self for the benefit of our fellow-men.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

35. - To those whose hearts, when Allah is mentioned, are filled with fear,

...وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ...

- who show patient perseverance over their afflictions,

...وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (٣٥)

- keep up regular prayer,

- and spend (in charity) out of what we have bestowed upon them.

C2812. Some qualities of Allah's devotees are mentioned here, in ascending order:

1. Humility before Allah makes them receptive, and prepares them to listen to Allah's Message;
2. fear of Allah, which is akin to love, touches their heart, and penetrates through their inmost being;
3. they are not afraid of anything in mortal life; they take their trials patiently, and they go on in a course of righteousness with constancy;
4. their prayer now is not a matter of form, but a real communion with Allah, with a sense of confidence such as a faithful servant feels in the presence of a kind and loving master;
5. and gratitude to Allah, as shown by practical acts of charity to all fellow-creatures.

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُم مِّن شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ...

36. The sacrificial camels we have made for you as among the Symbols from Allah:

in them is (much) good for you:

...فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافَّ...

then pronounce the name of Allah over them as they line up (for sacrifice):

C2813. See n. 2808 to 22:33 above.

What was expressed in general terms is applied here more particularly to camels, the most precious and useful animals of Arabia, whose mode of slaughter for sacrifice is different from that of smaller animals:

the special word for such sacrifice is Nahr (108:2).

...فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ...

when they are down on their sides (after slaughter), eat ye thereof, and feed such as (beg not but) live in contentment, and such as beg with due humility:

C2814. There are ethics in begging, as in charity. No approval is given to arrogant and insolent begging, though the relief of distress of all kinds, deserved and undeserved, is included in charity.

But those who beg with humility and those who receive gifts with gratitude and contentment are both mentioned for special attention.

Charity should not be given for show, or to get rid of importunate demands. It should find out real needs and meet them.

...كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٣٦)

thus have we made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful.

...لَن يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَٰكِن يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنكُمْ

37. It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah:

it is your piety that reaches Him:

...كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ...

He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you:

C2815. The essence of sacrifice has been explained in n. 2810.

No one should suppose that meat or blood is acceptable to the One True God. It was a Pagan fancy that Allah could be appeased by blood sacrifice. But Allah does accept the offering of our hearts, and as a symbol of such offer, some visible institution is necessary.

He has given us power over the brute creation, and permitted us to eat meat, but only if we pronounce His name at the solemn act of taking life, for without this solemn invocation, we are apt to forget the sacredness of life.

By the invocation we are reminded that wanton cruelty is not in our thoughts, but only the need of food. Now if we further deny the greater part of the food (some theologians fix the proportion at three-quarters or two-thirds) for the sake of our poorer brethren in solemn assembly in the precincts of the Haram (sacred territory), our symbolic act finds practical expression in benevolence, and that is the virtue sought to be taught.

We should be grateful to Allah for His guidance in this matter, in which many Peoples have gone wrong, and we should proclaim the true doctrine so that virtue and charity may increase among men.

...وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣٧)

and proclaim the Good News to all who do right.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدَافِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

38. Verily Allah will defend (from ill) those who believe:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ (٣٨)

verily, Allah loveth not any that is a traitor to faith, or shows ingratitude.

Section 6

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوا...

39. To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) because they are wronged --

C2816. Several translators have faded to notice that **yuqatalina** (in the best-approved texts) is in the passive voice, "against whom war is made", -not "who take arms against the unbelievers" as Sale translates it.

The clause -and verily ... their aid- is parenthetical. Verse 40 connects on with "they are wronged". The wrong is indicated: 'driven by persecution from their home, for no other reason than that they worshipped the One True God'.

This was the first occasion on which fighting -in self-defence- was permitted. This passage therefore undoubtedly dates from Madinah.

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ (٣٩)...

and verily, Allah is Most powerful for their aid --

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَن يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ...

40. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right -- (for no cause) except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah."

وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ...

Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another,

C2817. To allow a righteous people to fight against a ferocious and mischief-loving people was fully justified. But the justification was far greater here, when the little Muslim community was not only fighting for its own existence against the Makkan Quraish, but for the very existence of the Faith in the One True God.

They had as much right to be in Makkah and worship in the Ka'bah as the other Quraish; yet they were exiled for their Faith. It affected not the faith of one peculiar

people. The principle involved was that of all worship, Jewish or Christian as well as Muslim, and of all foundations built for pious uses.

...لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ...

there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure.

...وَلَيَنصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَن يَنصُرُهُ...

Allah will certainly aid those who aid His (cause);

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٤٠)...

for verily Allah is Full of Strength, Exalted in Might, (Able to enforce His Will).

C2818. 'Aziz means:

- Exalted in power, rank, dignity;
- Incomparable;
- Full of might and majesty;
- Able to enforce His Will.

The last signification is the one that predominates here.

...الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ...

41. (They are) those who, if We establish them in the land,
    - establish regular prayer
    - and give regular charity,

...وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ...

- enjoin the right and forbid wrong:

C2819. "Enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong" is an essential duty of the Muslim Ummah and one of the main purposes for which it has been raised.

See 3:104, 110; 9:71, 111-112.

...وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ (٤١)

with Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.

... وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ

42. If they treat thy (mission) as false, so did the Peoples before them (with their Prophets),

C2820. It is nothing new if the Prophet of Allah is accused of imposture. This was done in all ages; e.g,

- Noah (7:64);
- Hud the prophet of the 'Ad people (7:66);
- Salih the prophet of the Thamud (7:76);
- Abraham (21:55);
- Lut (7:82);
- Shu'aib the prophet of the Madyan people (7:85)
- and also of the Companions of the Wood (15:78).

The case of Moses is mentioned apart, as his people survived to the time of our Prophet and survive to the present, and they frequently rebelled against Moses (2:49-61).

... قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَثَمُودُ (٤٢)

the People of Noah, and 'Ad, and Thamud;

وَقَوْمُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ (٤٣)

43. Those of Abraham and Lut;

...وَأَصْحَابُ مَدْيَنَ

44. And the Companions of the Madyan people:

C2821. Were they the same as the Companions of the Wood?

See n. 2000 to 15:78.

...وَكُذِّبَ مُوسَى...

and Moses was rejected (in the same way).

...فَأَمْلَيْتُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ...

But I granted respite to the Unbelievers and (only) after that did I punish them:

...فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٤٤)

but how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)!

C2822. My Wrath on them, and the complete reversal of their fortune in consequence.

...فَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ...

45. How many populations have We destroyed, which were given to wrongdoing!

...فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا...

They tumbled down on their roofs.

C2823. The roofs fell in first, and the whole structure, walls and all, came tumbling after, as happens in ruins. The place was turned upside down.

...وَبِئْرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ وَقَصْرٍ مَّشِيدٍ (٤٥)

And how many wells are lying idle and neglected, and castles lofty and well-built!

C2824. In a dry country like Arabia, a well stands as a symbol for a living, flourishing population, and many place-names mean "the well of so-and-so" e.g., Bir 'Ali, a village just south of Madinah the quality of whose drinking water is famous, or Abyar Ibn Hassan, a noted stopping place on the road from Makkah to Madinah about 92 miles from Madinah.

...أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

46. Do they not travel through the land,

...فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا...

so that their hearts (and mind) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear?

C2825. The word for **"heart"** in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions.

Those who reject Allah's Message may have their physical eyes and ears, but their hearts are blind and deaf. If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of Allah's Providence and Allah's Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently?

...فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَٰكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ (٤٦)

Truly it is not their eyes that are blind but their hearts which are in their breasts.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَن يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ...

47. Yet they ask thee to hasten on the Punishment!

But Allah will not fail in His promise.

C2826. If Allah gives respite, those to whom it is given have a real chance of repentance and amendment. He will not curtail His promise of respite.

But on the other hand He has promised to call everyone to account for his deeds, and this involves justice and punishment for sin.

Hiis promise will also come true. It is foolish to try to hasten it. Time with Him is nothing. We keep count of time for our relative calculations. His existence is absolute, and not conditioned by Time or Place. What we call a thousand years may be nothing more than a day or a minute to Him.

...وَإِنَّ يَوْمًا عِندَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ (٤٧)

Verily a day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning.

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَمْلَيْتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ...

48. And to how many populations did I give respite, which were given to wrongdoing?

C2827. The argument begun in 22:45 is now rounded off and closed.

... ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهَا...

In the end I punished them.

...وَإِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ (٤٨)

To Me is the destination (of all).

C.153 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(22:49-78)

The power of Evil is in insidious suggestion:
They are only a trial to those whose hearts
Are inclined to evil, but Truth doth shine
The nobler for the Believers, by the grace
And guidance of Allah. Martyrs who give
Their all in the cause of Allah will find
A provision ample and eternal. The finest
And subtlest mysteries are but proofs of the goodness
Of Allah, Dispute not about rites and ceremonies:
Follow the Straight Way. Seek for worship
The Only True God, and strive in His service,
That ye may be witness among men
To Allah's Truth, as the Prophet is witness to you.

Section 7

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٤٩)

49. Say:

"O men! I am (sent) to you only to give a clear warning:

C2828. It is Messenger's duty to convey the warning in the clearest terms to the wicked.

It is not part of his duty to coerce them or judge them, or bring on the Punishment for them. That only rests with Allah. But the warning itself is full of Mercy: for it gives the highest hope to the repentant sinner who turns and comes to Allah.

فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٥٠)

50. "Those who believe and work righteousness, for them is forgiveness and a sustenance most generous.

C2829. The **"sustenance"** must be construed in the widest sense, spiritual as well as intellectual and physical.

The reward of righteousness is far more generous than any merit there may be in the creature following the Will of his Creator.

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (٥١)

51. "But those who strive against Our Signs, to frustrate them, they will be Companions of the Fire."

C2830. It will not be in their power to **frustrate** Allah's Plan; all they will do is to go further and further down in their spiritual state, deeper and deeper in their Hell.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ...

52. Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet before thee,

...إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّىٰ أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ...

but, when he framed a desire, Satan threw some (vanity) into his desire:

C2831. Prophets and messengers (the distinction is explained in n. 2503 to 19:51) are but human. Their actions are righteous and their motives pure. But in judging things from a human point of view, the suggestion may come to their mind (from Satan) that it would be good to have power or wealth or influence for furthering Allah's cause, or that it may be good to conciliate some faction which may be irreconcilable.

In fact, in Allah's Plan, it may be the opposite. Allah, in His mercy and inspiration, will cancel any false or vain suggestions of this kind, and confirm and strengthen His own Commands and make known His Will in His Signs or revelations.

...فَيَنسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ...

but Allah will cancel anything (vain) that Satan throws in,

...ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ...

and Allah will confirm (and establish) His Signs:

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٥٢)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom:

C2832. This clause and the similar clause at the end of the next verse are parenthetical.

لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ ...

53. That He may make the suggestions thrown in by Satan, but a trial for those in whose hearts is a disease ,

C2833. If any suggestion comes to the human mind that is not in accordance with Allah's Will and Plan, it has two opposite effects:

- to evil minds it is a trial and temptation from the Satan,
- but to the mind well-instructed in Faith, it stands self-condemned at once, and becomes a means of strengthening the Faith and stimulating redoubled efforts to conform to the Will of Allah.

... وَالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

and who are hardened of heart:

C2834. Cf. 2:10.

I understand the "disease in the heart" to be an earlier state of curse, which leads in an intensified form to a complete **"hardening of the heart"**.

...وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٣)

verily the wrongdoers are in a schism far (from the Truth):

وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ...

54. And that those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qur'án) is the Truth from thy Lord,

C2835. The last clause in the last verse was parenthetical. Treat this clause as parallel with the first clause in verse 53, "that he may make", etc. Both will then connect with "Allah will confirm (and establish) His Signs" in verse 52. See n. 2833 above.

...فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it:

...وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٥٤)

for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe, to the Straight Way.

وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً...

55. Those who reject Faith will not cease to be in doubt concerning (Revelation) until the Hour (of Judgment) comes suddenly upon them,

C2836. The penalty of deliberately rejecting Faith is that the person doing so closes the channels of Mercy that flow from Allah. He will always be subject to doubts and superstitions, until the time comes when all earthly scales fall from his spiritual eyes. But then there will be no time for Repentance: it will be too late to profit by the guidance of Allah given through Revelation.

...أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَقِيمٍ (٥٥)

or there comes to them the Penalty of a Day of Disaster.

... الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلَّهِ

56. On that Day the Dominion will be that of Allah:

C2837. Such power as Evil has over those who yield to it (17:62-64) will then be gone, as the respite granted to Satan be over, and Allah's Kingdom will be established.

... يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ...

He will judge between them:

...فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (٥٦)

so those who believe and work righteous deeds will be in Gardens of Delight.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (٥٧)

57. And for those who reject Faith and deny Our Signs, there will be a humiliating Punishment.

Section 8

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوا أَوْ مَاتُوا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللَّهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا...

58. Those who leave their homes in the Cause of Allah, and are then slain or die -- on them will Allah bestow verily a goodly Provision:

C2838. Rizq: sustenance, provision.

I have preferred the latter word here, because after death we can only think of rizq in a large metaphorical sense. i.e., all the provision necessary to equip the person for a full and happy Future Life, and also, I think, a provision for his dependents and near and dear ones in this life. (R).

...وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (٥٨)

truly Allah is He Who bestows the best Provision.

لَيُدْخِلَنَّهُم مُّدْخَلًا يَرْضَوْنَهُ...

59. Verily He will admit them to a place with which they shall be well pleased:

...وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ (٥٩)

for Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

C2839. Martyrdom is the sacrifice of life in the service of Allah. Its reward is therefore even greater than that of an ordinarily good life.

The martyr's sins are forgiven by the very act of martyrdom, which implies service and self-surrender in the highest sense of the word- Allah knows all his past life but will forbear from calling him to account for things that should strictly come into his account.

ذَٰلِكَ...

60. That (is so).

وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبَ بِهِ ثُمَّ بُغِيَ عَلَيْهِ لَيَنصُرَنَّهُ اللَّهُ...

And if one has retaliated to no greater extent than the injury he received, and is again set upon inordinately, Allah will help him:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ (٦٠)

for Allah is One that blots out (sins) and forgives (again and again).

C2840. Ordinarily Muslims are enjoined to bear injuries with patience and return good for evil (23:96).

But there are occasions when human feelings get the better of our wise resolutions, or when, in a state of conflict or war, we return "as good as we get". In that case our retaliation is permissible, provided the injury we inflict is not greater than that we receive.

After such retaliation we are even, but if the other side again acts aggressively and goes beyond all bounds in attacking us, we are entitled to protection from Allah in spite of all our faults; for Allah is One that blots out our sins, and forgives again and again.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ...

61. That is because Allah merges Night into Day, and He merges Day into Night,

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ (٦١)

and verily it is Allah Who hears and sees (all things).

C2841. To some it may appear strange or even irreconcilable that Allah should be both Merciful and Just; that He should both protect His devotees and yet ask for their self- sacrifice- that he should command them to return good for evil, and yet permit retaliation under certain restrictions.

But such thoughts are short-sighted.

Do they not see many inconsistencies in all Life, all Nature, and all Creation?

Why, even in such simple phenomena as Night and Day, the one merges into the other, and no one can tell when precisely the one begins and the other ends.

Yet we can see in a rough sort of way that the one gives rest and the other activity, that the one reveals the beauties of the starry heavens and the other the splendour of the sun.

In countless ways we can see there the wisdom and the fine artistry of Allah. And there are subtle nuances and merging in nature that our intelligence can hardly penetrate. Now human life and human relations are far more complicated, and it is Allah alone Who can see all the subtle distinctions and hear the cries of all His creatures, in a world which Tennyson described as "red in tooth and claw".

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ...

62. That is because Allah -- He is the Reality:

C2842. The emphatic construction calls attention to the fact that Allah is the only abiding Reality. All else is like shadows that will pass away.

...وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ...

and those besides Him whom they invoke -- they are but vain Falsehood:

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ (٦٢)

verily Allah is He, Most High, Most Great.

C2843. See n. 2841 above.

Our vain imaginings, groundless doubts, foolish subtleties, and false worship should all give place to trust and faith in the one and only Reality.

...أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتُصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً

63. Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and forthwith the earth becomes clothed with green?

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ (٦٣)

For Allah is He Who understands the finest mysteries, and is well-acquainted (with them).

C2844. Latif, as a name of Allah, is as difficult to define in words as the idea it seeks to represent is difficult to grasp in our minds.

It implies:

1. fine, subtle (the basic meaning);
2. so fine and subtle as to be imperceptible to human sight;
3. so pure as to be incomprehensible;
4. with sight so perfect as to see and understand the finest subtleties and mysteries;
5. so kind and gracious as to bestow gifts of the most refined kind; extraordinarily gracious and understanding.

No. 4 is the predominant meaning here and in 12:100;

Nos. 2 and 3 in 6:103;

and No.5 in 42:19;

but every shade of meaning must be borne in mind in each case, as a subsidiary factor in the spiritual melody.

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

64. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth:

...وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٦٤)

for verily Allah -- He is Free of all wants, Worthy of all praise.

C2845. Each of the verses 22:61-63 mentioned two attributes of Allah with reference to the contents of that verse.

This verse now sums up the whole argument, and the two attributes with which it closes sum up the idea by which we can understand Allah's goodness.

Allah's loving kindness and mercies are not like those of human creatures who all depend upon one another, and often expect some kindness or recognition in return. Allah is above all wants and depends in no way whatever on His creatures. His mercies have therefore a special quality, which we cannot describe except by gratefully singing the praises of Allah.

Cf. 2:267.

Section 9

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

65. Seest thou not that Allah has made subject to you (men) all that is on the earth,

...وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ...

and the ships that sail through the sea by His command?

C2846. Land and sea have been made subject to man by Allah's command, so that man can develop his life freely on earth.

...وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاء أَن تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ...

He withholds the sky (rain) from falling on the earth except by His leave:

C2847. Sama means

1. something high,
2. a roof, a ceiling,
3. the sky, the canopy of heaven.
4. cloud or rain.

I understand the last meaning here, though most authorities seem to render it by some such words as "sky".

If we understand rain here, we have a complete picture of the three elements in which man lives-land, air and sea. Rain is also appropriate for mention with Allah's kindness and mercy. He regulates the rain for man's benefit.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٦٥)

for Allah is Most Kind and Most Merciful to man.

...وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ...

66. It is He Who gave you life, will cause you to die, and will again give you life:

...إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ (٦٦)

truly man is a most ungrateful creature!

...لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ...

67. To every People have we appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow,

C2848. Rites and ceremonies may appear to be an unimportant matter compared with "weightier matters of the Law" and with the higher needs of man's spiritual nature. But they are necessary for social and religious organisation, and their effect on the individual himself is not to be despised.

In any case, as they are visible external symbols, they give rise to the most heated controversies. Such controversies are to be deprecated.

That does not mean that our rites and ceremonies are to be made light of. Those in Islam rest on the highest social and religious needs of man, and if we are convinced that we are on the Right Way, we should invite all to join us, without entering into controversies about such matters.

...فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَادْعُ إِلَى رَبِّكَ...

let them not then dispute with thee on the matter, but do thou invite (them) to thy Lord:

...إِنَّكَ لَعَلَى هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٦٧)

for thou art assuredly on the Right Way.

وَإِن جَادَلُوكَ فَقُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٦٨)

68. If they do wrangle with thee, say,

"Allah knows best what it is ye are doing."

C2849. 'You are only wrangling about matters about which you have no knowledge nor any deep religious feeling. The springs of your conduct are all open before Allah, and He will judge you.'

اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٦٩)

69. "Allah will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning the matters in which ye differ."

C2850. 'You not only find fault with the very few and simple rites and ceremonies in Islam: you, outside Islam, have no rites and ceremonies which you are yourselves agreed upon, either as Christians or as Jews, or one compared with the other.'

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

70. Knowest thou not that Allah knows all that is in heaven and on earth?

...إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ...

Indeed it is all in a record,

...إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (٧٠)

and that is easy for Allah.

C2851. We human beings can only think of knowledge being accurately and permanently preserved by means of a record. Allah's knowledge has all the qualities of a perfect record, and it is moreover complete and comprehensive. This is not difficult for Him from whom flow all knowledge and intelligence.

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَا لَيْسَ لَهُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

71. Yet they worship, besides Allah, things for which no authority has been sent down to them, and of which they have (really) no knowledge:

...وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ (٧١)

for those that do wrong there is no helper.

C2852. When plain common-sense shows the absurdity of false worship, behind which there is neither knowledge, intelligence, nor authority (quite the contrary), who or what can help the false misguided creatures who dishonour Allah by false worship?

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنكَرَ...

72. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, thou wilt notice a denial on the faces of the Unbelievers!

C2853. Munkar;

- a refusal to accept something offered;
- a denial of something stated or pointed out;
- a feeling of disapproval or active aversion, or disgust.

...يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا...

They nearly attack with violence those who rehearse Our Signs to them.

...قُلْ أَفَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِشَرٍّ مِّن ذَٰلِكُمُ...

Say,

"Shall I tell you of something (far) worse than these Signs?

C2854. There is irony here.

'You think Allah's revelations and Signs are distasteful to you! There will be something far more distasteful to you if you do not repent! What do you say to the inevitable Punishment?'

...النَّارُ...

It is the fire (of Hell)!

...وَعَدَهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

Allah has promised it to the Unbelievers!

...وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٧٢)...

And evil is that destination!"

Section 10

...يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ...

73. O men!

Here is a parable set forth! Listen to it!

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَن يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوِ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ ...

Those on whom, besides Allah ye call, cannot create (even) a fly, if they all met together for the purpose!

...وَإِن يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَّا يَسْتَنقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ...

And if the fly should snatch away anything from them, they would have no power to release it from the fly:

...ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ (٧٣)...

feeble are those who petition and those whom they petition!

C2855. Both idols and their worshippers are poor, foolish, feeble creatures!

...مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ...

74. No just estimate have they made of Allah:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٧٤)...

for Allah is He Who is strong and able to carry out His Will.

C2856. No one can have a true idea of Allah, who descends to the base forms of false worship. Allah has all power, and He is fully able to carry out every part of His Will and Plan.

He is exalted above all in power and dignity.

Cf. 22:40 and n. 2818 for the full meaning of **'Aziz**.

اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ...

75. Allah chooses Messengers from angels and from men:

C2857. Men are chosen as Messengers to ordinary men; for ordinary men will not be able to understand and be in communion with beings so refined as angels. But angels are sent as Messengers to Allah's chosen prophets, to convey the Message from time to time.

In either case they are chosen by Allah, are subject to Allah's Will, and should not be worshipped as gods.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ (٧٥)

for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things).

C2858. As Allah regards the humblest of His creatures and hears their prayer, He sends men messengers out of their own brethren (see last note), and to such messengers He communicates the highest spiritual Truths through His angels.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ...

76. He knows what is before them and what is behind them:

...وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (٧٦)

and to Allah go back all questions (for decision).

C2859. Time, before or behind, may be of some importance to men. They may dispute as to what was the first Message, and what is the last Message.

To Allah, this question of priority and posteriority is of no consequence. All questions go back ultimately to Him and are judged on their merits.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ...

77. O ye who believe!

bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord;

...وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٧٧)

and do good; that ye may prosper.

C2860. Prosper: in a spiritual sense, both in this life and the Hereafter.

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ...

78. And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline):

C2861. As far as the striving is concerned with Jihad in the narrow sense, see the limitations in n. 204 to 2:190 and n. 205 to 2:191.

But the words are perfectly general and apply to all true and unselfish striving for spiritual good.

...هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ...

He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion;

C2862. The Jews were hampered by many restrictions, and their religion was racial.

Christianity, as originally preached, was a hermit religion: "sell whatsoever thou hast" (Mark 10:21); "take no thought for the morrow" (Matt. 6:34).

Islam, as originally preached, gives freedom and full play to man's faculties of every kind. It is universal, and claims to date from Adam: father Abraham is mentioned as the great Ancestor of those among whom Islam was first preached (Jews, Christians, and Arab Quraysh).

...مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ...

it is the cult of your father Abraham.

...هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِن قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا...

It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation);

C2863. Before: see Abraham's prayer in 2:128. In this revelation: in this very verse, as well as in other places

...لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاء عَلَى النَّاسِ...

that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind!

C2864. See 2:143, and notes 143 and 144.

As the Prophet is a guide and exemplar among us, so Muslims ought to be exemplars amongst mankind. The best witness to Allah's Truth are those who show its light in their lives.

...فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ...

So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity,

...وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ...

and hold fast to Allah! He is your Protector --

...فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ (٧٨)

the Best to protect and the Best to help!



All the praises and thanks be to Allâh, Who has saved us from the people who are Zâlimûn (i.e. oppressors, wrong-doers, polytheists, those who join others in worship with Allâh, etc.).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Mu'minun



Introduction and Summary

This Surah deals with the virtues which are the seed-bed of Faith, especially in an environment in which truth is denied and its votaries insulted and persecuted. But Truth is One and must prevail. Those who do wrong will be filled with vain regrets when it is too late for repentance.

It belongs to the late Makkan period.

Summary- Faith, coupled with humility in prayer, charity, abstinence from vanity and from indulgence in appetites, and strict probity, must lead to final success, even though people mock and accuse the righteous and false motives, as did the contemporaries of Noah, of Moses, and of Jesus (23:1-50, and C. 154).

The prophets of Allah and the righteous form one Brotherhood, but those who make schisms and refuse to believe have ample evidence pointing to Truth and the goodness and greatness of Allah (23:51-92, and C. 155).

Evil must be replied by goodness and faith in Allah; for the future life is sure, and those who disbelieve will wish for another chance when it is too late (23:93-118, and C. 154).

C.154 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(23:1-50)

Faith leads to humility, avoidance
Of vanity in word and deed, charity,
Continence, faithful observance
Of trusts and covenants, and devout
Approach to Allah-surest steps
To Bliss. Man carries in himself
Proofs of Allah's Providence, the same
Story is told if he looks at nature
Around him; and the long line of Teachers
Sent by Allah shows Allah's special care
Of humanity. What though they were
Rejected and scorned, maligned and persecuted?
Allah's Truth won through, as it always will.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١)

1. The Believers must (eventually) win through --

C2865. Aflaha:

- win through,
- prosper,
- succeed,
- achieve their aims or obtain salvation from sorrow and all evil.

This verse connects on with verses 10 and 11 below. The success or victory may come in this world, but is certain and lasting in the world to come.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ (٢)

2. Those who humble themselves in their prayers;

C2866. Humility in prayer as regards:

- their estimate of their own worth in Allah's presence,
- as regards their estimate of their own powers or strength unless they are helped by Allah, and
- as regards the petitions they offer to Allah.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ (٣)

3. Who avoid vain talk;

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ (٤)

4. Who are active in deeds of charity;

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ (٥)

5. Who abstain from sex,

C2867. The Muslim must guard himself against every kind of sex abuse or sex perversion.

The new psychology associated with the name of Freud traces many of our hidden motives to sex, and it is common knowledge that our refinement or degradation may be measured by the hidden workings of our sex instincts. But even the natural and lawful exercise of sex is restricted to the marriage bond, under which the rights of both parties are duly regulated and maintained.

إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ...

6. Except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, or (the captives) whom their right hands possess --

C2868. This is further explained and amplified in 4:25. It will be seen there that the status of a captive when raised to freedom by marriage is the same as that of a free woman as regards her rights, but more lenient as regards the punishment to be inflicted if she falls from virtue.

...فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ (٦)

for (in their case) they are free from blame,

فَمَنِ ابْتَغَى وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ (٧)

7. But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors --

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ (٨)

8. Those who faithfully observe their trust and their covenants;

C2869. Trusts may be express or implied.

- Express trusts are those where property is entrusted or duties are assigned by some one to some other whom he trusts, to carry out either immediately or in specified contingencies, such as death.
- Implied trusts arise out of power, or position, or opportunity; e.g., a king holds his kingdom on trust from Allah for his subjects.

The subject of covenants, express and implied, has been discussed in n. 682 to 5:1.

Covenants create obligations, and express and implied trusts and covenants taken together cover the whole field of obligations.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (٩)

9. And who (strictly) guard their prayers --

C2870. In verse 2 we were directed to the spirit of humility and earnestness in our prayers.

Here we are told how necessary the habit of regular prayer is to our spiritual well-being and development, as it brings us closer to Allah, and thus sums up the light of the seven jewels of our Faith, viz.,:

- humility,
- avoidance of vanity,
- charity,
- sex purity,
- fidelity to trusts,
- and to covenants,
- and an earnest desire to get closer to Allah.

أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ (١٠)

10. Those will be the heirs,

C2871. Cf. 21:105, where it is said that the righteous will inherit the earth.

In the first verse of this Surah, the final success or victory is referred to.

Truth will prevail even on this earth, but it may not be for any individual men of righteousness to see it: it may be in the time of their heirs and successors.

But in the life to come, there is no doubt that every man will see the fruit of his life here, and the righteous will inherit heaven. in the sense that they will attain it after their death here.

الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (١١)

11. Who will inherit Paradise: they will dwell therein (forever).

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِن سُلَالَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ (١٢)

12. Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay);

C2872. In this beautiful passage, Allah's creative work, as far as man is concerned, is recapitulated, in order to show man's real position in this life, and the certainty of the future: to which he was referred for his reward in verses 10-11 above.

For the various stages of creation, see n. 120 to 2:117.

Here we are not concerned with the earliest stage, the creation of primeval matter out of nothing. It is also a process of creation when inorganic matter becomes living matter. Thus inorganic constituents of the earth are absorbed into living matter by way of food and living matter reproduces itself by means of sperm. This is deposited in the ovum and fertilises it and rests for a time in security in the mother's womb.

The first change in the fertilised ovum is the conversion into a sort of clot of thickly congealed blood; the zygote cells grow by segmentation; then the mass gradually assumes shape in its growth as a foetus. From the lump develop bones and flesh and organs and a nervous system.

So far man's growth is like that of an animal, but a further process takes place which makes the infant animal into the infant man. This is the breathing from Allah's spirit into him (15:29). It may be a continuous process parallel to that of physical growth.

The child is born; it grows; it decays and dies; but after death another chapter opens for the individual, and it is to remind us of this most momentous chapter that the previous stages are recapitulated.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ (١٣)

13. Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed;

C2873. The growth in the foetal stage is silent and unseen. The foetus is protected in the mother's womb like a king in a castle; it is firmly fixed, and gets the protection of the mother's body, on which it depends for its own growth until birth.

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً...

14. Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood;

...فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً...

then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump;

...فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا...

then We made out of that lump bones

...فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا...

and clothed the bones with flesh;

...ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ...

then We developed out of it another creature:

C2874. From a mere animal, we now consider man as man.

Is it not a Sign of wonder in itself that from dry dust (*turab*, 22:5) or inorganic matter should be made protoplasm (moist clay or organic matter); from it should grow a new animal life; and out of it should grow human life, with all its capacities and responsibilities?

Man carries within himself Signs of Allah's wisdom and power, and he can see them every day in the universe around him.

...فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ (١٤)

so blessed be Allah, the Best to create!

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ (١٥)

15. After that, at length, ye will die.

C2875. Our physical death in this mortal life seems to make a break. But if it were the end of all, our life becomes meaningless. Our own instinct tells us that it cannot be so, and Allah assures us that there will be a resurrection for judgment.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ (١٦)

16. Again, on the Day of Judgment, will ye be raised up.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَائِقَ...

17. And We have made, above you, seven tracts;

C2876. Taraiq: literally tracts, roads, orbits or paths.

Here it means: seven heavens.

The assurance given in the next clause, that Allah cares for us and all His Creation, calls out attention to Allah's goodness, which is further illustrated in the subsequent verses.

...وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غَافِلِينَ (١٧)

and We are never unmindful of (Our) Creation.

C2877. Allah's care for His Creation is ceaseless. A few examples of His care for our physical well-being are given in verses 18-22, and for our spiritual well-being, in Sections 2 to 5.

وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَسْكَنَّاهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

18. And We send down water from the sky according to (due) measure, and We cause it to soak in the soil;

C2878. Normally the rain comes well distributed; it soaks into the soil; the moisture is retained for a long time in all high grounds; it soaks and penetrates through many layers of soil and forms the architecture of physical geography; the retentive powers of higher soil enable

rivers to flow perennially even where, as in India, the rainfall is seasonal and confined to a few months in the year.

Another form in which water comes down from the sky according to due measure is in snow and hail: these also have their place in the economy of air and soil. Were it not for snow and glaciers in the higher mountain regions, some of the rivers would fail in their abundant flow.

As wonderful as the supply of water and moisture is its drainage. It returns to the sea and air in all sorts of ways, and the formation of mist and clouds repeats the cycle. Were it not for the drainage and the clearance of the waters, we should have floods and water logging, as happens when the normal processes of nature are temporarily obstructed.

The same thing happens when the rain comes down in other than due measure. These abnormal conditions also have their value. But how grateful should man be for Allah's gifts in the ceaseless processes of nature on such an enormous scale!

...وَإِنَّا عَلَى ذَهَابٍ بِهِ لَقَادِرُونَ (١٨)

and We certainly are able to drain it off (with ease).

...فَأَنشَأْنَا لَكُم بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ مِّن نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ

19. With it We grow for you gardens of date-palms and vines:

...لَّكُمْ فِيهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (١٩)

in them have ye abundant fruits:

and of them ye eat (and have enjoyment) --

C2879. Cf. 7:19 and n. 776 to 5:66.

...وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِن طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ

20. Also a tree springing out of Mount Sinai,

C2880. For Arabia the best olives grow round about Mount Sinai. The fig, the olive, Mount Sinai, and the sacred city of Makkah are mentioned together in

association in 95:1-3, where we shall consider its meaning.

Olive oil is an ingredient in medicinal ointments. If used for food, the olive has a delicious flavour, Cf. also 24:35, where the olive is called a Blessed Tree, and n. 3000.

...تَنبُتُ بِالدُّهْنِ وَصِبْغٍ لِّلْآكِلِينَ (٢٠)

which produces oil, and relish for those who use it for food.

...وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً

21. And in cattle (too) ye have an instructive example:

C2881. 'Ibrat. the root meaning of the verb is "to interpret, or expound, or instruct", as in 12:43;

the noun means, an interpretation, or example or Sign that instructs, as here and in 16:66, or gives warning, as in 3:13.

- From cattle we get milk and meat; also from their skins we make leather for shoes, boots, straps, saddlery, and numerous other uses;
- from camel's hair and sheep's wool we weave cloth, hangings, carpets, etc.;
- from the horns of cattle we make cups and articles of ornament or use; and camels, horses, donkeys, mules, etc., are used for riding, carrying loads, or drawing vehicles.

...نُّسقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا...

from within their bodies We produce (milk) for you to drink;

...وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٢١)

there are, in them, (besides), numerous (other) benefits for you;

and of their (meat) ye eat;

وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ (٢٢)

22. And on them, as well as in ships, ye ride.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ...

23. (Further, We sent a long line of prophets for your instruction.)

C2882. The material gifts having been mentioned, which we receive from a wise and kindly Providence, our attention is now directed to Allah's Providence in spiritual matters. He sent Teachers to instruct and guide us, and though they were mocked, rejected, and accused of falsehood and selfishness, they were protected by Allah, and Allah's Truth at length prevailed.

We sent Noah to his people: he said,

C2883. **"People"** here is almost equivalent to "contemporaries".

...يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

"O my people! worship Allah! Ye have no other god but Him:

C2884. Cf. 7:59.

To fear Allah is to lead righteous lives and eschew evil.

...أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (٢٣)...

will ye not fear (Him)?"

...فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ...

24. The chiefs of the Unbelievers among his people said:

...مَا هَٰذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَن يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ...

"He is no more than a man like yourselves: his wish is to assert his superiority over you:

...وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً...

if Allah had wished (to send messengers), He could have sent down angels:

C2885. They attribute altogether wrong motives to him (such as would have actuated them themselves), in saying that he was trying to establish his own personal superiority over them by his preaching.

Then they accuse him of falsehood in claiming to bring a message of Allah. "If", they say, "Allah had wished to send us messengers, He would have sent angels, not a man like ourselves and from among ourselves. Our ancestors did not worship One God: why should we?"

...مَّا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ (٢٤)

never did we hear such a thing (as he says), among our ancestors of old."

... إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ

25. (And some said:) "He is only a man possessed:

C2886. I construe this to be a speech of another group among them.

They thought he was mad, and best left alone. His madness would run out, or he would come to an evil end.

... فَتَرَبَّصُوا بِهِ حَتَّى حِينٍ (٢٥)

wait (and have patience) with him for a time."

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ (٢٦)

26. (Noah) said:

"O my Lord! help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood!"

...فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنِ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا

27. So We inspired him (with this message):

"Construct the Ark within Our sight and under Our guidance:

C2887. Cf. this whole passage with 11:35-48, and notes thereon.

...فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ ...

then when comes Our command, and the fountains of the earth gush forth,

C2888. See n. 1533 to 11:40, where the word Tannur is explained.

... فَاسْلُكْ فِيهَا مِن كُلٍّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ...

take thou on board pairs of every species, male and female,

C2889. See. n. 1534 to 11:40.

...وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَن سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ...

and thy family -- except those of them against whom the Word has already gone forth:

C2890. See n. 1535 to 11:40.

...وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُم مُّغْرَقُونَ (٢٧)

and address Me not in favor of the wrongdoers; for they shall be drowned (in the Flood).

فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنتَ وَمَن مَّعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلْكِ فَقُلِ...

28. And when thou hast embarked on the Ark -- thou and those with thee -- say:

C2891. For **istawa** see 1386 to 10:3.

Here the meaning is:

- mounted on board,
- ascended,
- embarked.

...الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّانَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٨)

"Praise be to Allah, Who has saved us from the people who do wrong."

... وَقُل رَّبِّ أَنزِلْنِي مُنزَلًا مُّبَارَكًا

29. And say:

"O my Lord! enable me to disembark with Thy blessing:

C2892. This second prayer was inspired when the Flood subsided, and the time came for disembarkation.

... وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ (٢٩)

for Thou art the Best to enable (us) to disembark."

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ وَإِن كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِينَ (٣٠)

30. Verily in this there are Signs (for men to understand);
(thus) do We try (men).

C2893. Noah's contemporaries had all sorts of chances and warnings. But they refused to believe and perished. But Allah's Truth survived, and it went to the next and succeeding generations. Will not mankind understand?

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ (٣١)

31. Then We raised after them another generation;

فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ...

32. And We sent to them a Messenger from among themselves, (saying),

C2894. If this refers to any particular prophet, it must be Hud whose mission was to the 'Ad people, or to Salih, whose mission was to the Thamud people. That is the sequence after Noah in S. 11:50-60 and 61-68.

But I think that as the name is not mentioned, we are to understand in general the type of the post -Flood prophets until we come later on to Moses and Jesus. The object here is not to recount the stories, but to show that the resistance of the wicked made no difference to the triumph of Allah's holy Truth.

...أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

"Worship Allah! ye have no other god but Him.

...أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (٣٢)

Will ye not fear (Him)?"

Section 3

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ...

33. And the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved and denied the Meeting in the Hereafter,

...وَأَتْرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

and on whom We had bestowed the good things of this life, said:

...مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ...

"He is no more than a man like yourselves;

...يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ (٣٣)

he eats of that of which ye eat, and drinks of what ye drink.

وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُم بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ (٣٤)

34. "If ye obey a man like yourselves, behold, it is certain ye will be lost.

C2895. The type of the narrow Sybarite, who enjoys the good things of this life, denies a future life, and is jealous of any one who presumes to widen his horizon, is here described in a few masterly strokes. He is bored by any mention of the serious things beyond his ken.

What good is it, he says, to talk about the future?

Enjoy the present. The gain is all in the present: the loss is all in the future.

أَيَعِدُكُمْ أَنَّكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنَّكُم مُّخْرَجُونَ (٣٥)

35. "Does he promise that when ye die and become dust and bones, ye shall be brought forth (again)?

هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ (٣٦)

36. "Far, very far is that which ye are promised!

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا...

37. "There is nothing but our life in this world! We shall die and we live!

C2896. They seem to say;

"There is no future life: that we shall die is certain; that we have this life is certain: some die, some are born, some live: and so the cycle continues: but how can dead men be raised to life?"

...وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ (٣٧)

But we shall never be raised up again!

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا...

38. "He is only a man who invents a lie against Allah,

...وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣٨)

but we are not the ones to believe in him!"

C2897. "He is only a fool, and invents things, and attributes them to Allah's inspiration! We are too wise to believe such things!"

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ (٣٩)

39. (The prophet) said: "O my Lord! help me: for that they accuse me of falsehood."

C2898. See above, 23:26.

Every prophet is maligned and persecuted: it is always the same story with them, told in different ways.

قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لَيُصْبِحُنَّ نَادِمِينَ (٤٠)

40. (Allah) said: "In but a little while, they are sure to be sorry!"

C2899. When the Punishment comes, they will be sorry for themselves, but it will be too late then.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ ...

41. Then the Blast overtook them with justice,

C2900. See 11:66, and notes 1563 and 1561.

... فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غُثَاءً...

and We made them as rubbish of dead leaves (floating on the stream of Time)!

C2901. Ghutha: rubbish of dead leaves, or scum floating on a torrent.

...فَبُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤١)

So away with the people who do wrong!

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُونًا آخَرِينَ (٤٢)

42. Then We raised after them other generations.

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ (٤٣)

43. No people can hasten their term, nor can they delay (it).

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرَا...

44. Then sent We Our Messengers in succession:

...كُلَّ مَا جَاء أُمَّةً رَّسُولُهَا كَذَّبُوهُ...

every time there came to a people their Messenger, they accused him of falsehood:

...فَأَتْبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُم بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ...

so We made them follow each other (in punishment): We made them as a tale (that is told):

C2902. Their habitations and their organisation have been wiped out. What remains is merely a vague story of their existence, a tale that is told. Where their name remains, which is not always the case, it is only a by-word, suggesting all that is unstable and ephemeral,-"to point a moral and adorn a tale".

...فَبُعْدًا لِّقَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٤٤)

so away with a people that will not believe!

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٤٥)

45. Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron, with Our Signs and authority manifest,

C2903. Moses and Aaron had a twofold mission:

1. to Pharaoh and his Court, which failed because of Egyptian arrogance;
2. to the Israelites, for whom the Law was received on Mount Sinai, but they repeatedly rebelled against Allah.

In both cases there were miracles **("Clear Signs")** and other proofs which showed that they came at Allah's command and were inspired by His authority.

إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ...

46. To Pharaoh and his Chiefs:

...فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ (٤٦)

but these behaved insolently: they were arrogant people.

فَقَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عَابِدُونَ (٤٧)

47. They said:

"Shall we believe in two men like ourselves?

And their people are subject to us!"

C2904. Racial arrogance made the Egyptians say, 'These men belong to a race which we hold in subjection as our slaves: how can we accept them as messengers of Allah?'

فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ (٤٨)

48. So they accused them of falsehood, and they became of those who were destroyed.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ (٤٩)

49. And We gave Moses the Book, in order that they might receive guidance.

C2905. Here the reference is to the second part of the mission of Moses, that to the Israelites, which the Israelites rendered ineffective by their want of faith.

See n. 2903 above.

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً...

50. And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a Sign:

C2906. The virgin birth of Jesus was a miracle both for him and his mother. She was falsely accused of unchastity, but the child Jesus triumphantly vindicated

her by his own miracles (19:27-33), and showed by his life the meanness of the calumny against his mother.

...وَآوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ (٥٠)

We gave them both shelter on high ground, affording rest and security and furnished with springs.

C2907. There is no need to look far for the place where mother and child were given secure shelter. It is described in 19:22-26.

It was the place to which she withdrew to be delivered when the time drew near. There was a fruitful palm-tree, evidently on high ground, for beneath it flowed a spring. She retired there in seclusion, and she and her child rested there until it was time for her to go to her people with her child.

C.155 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(23:51-92)

The Brotherhood of Truth is one in all ages;
It is narrow men who create sects.
Let them not think that the goods
Of this world can shield them from evil
Or its consequences. Allah's Truth and His Messenger
Can be known to all: for He in His Mercy
Has given us faculties and Judgement, if we
Would but use them. The Message is not
New: all Creation proclaims it: High
Above all is the Lord of Glory Supreme!

Section 4

...يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا

51. O ye Messengers! enjoy (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness:

C2908. Literally, "eat". See n. 776 to 5:66.

The prophets of Allah do not pose as ascetics, but receive gratefully all Allah's gifts, and show their gratitude by their righteous lives. (R).

...إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ (٥١)

for I am well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

...وَإِنَّ هَٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً

52. And verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood,

C2909. Cf. 21:92-93.

All prophets form one Brotherhood: their message is one, and their religion and teaching are one; they serve the One True God, Who loves and cherishes them; and they owe their duty to Him and Him alone.

...وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ (٥٢)

and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me (and no other).

...فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا

53. But people have cut off their affair (of unity), between them, into sects:

...كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ (٥٣)

each party rejoices in that which is with itself.

C2910. The people who began to trade on the names of the prophets cut off that unity and made sects; and each sect rejoices in its own narrow doctrine, instead of taking the universal teaching of Unity from Allah. But this sectarian confusion is of man's making. It will last for a time, but the rays of Truth and Unity will finally dissipate it.

فَذَرْهُمْ فِي غَمْرَتِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ (٥٤)

54. But leave them in their confused ignorance for a time.

أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُم بِهِ مِن مَّالٍ وَبَنِينَ (٥٥)

55. Do they think that because We have granted them abundance of wealth and sons,

نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ...

56. We would hasten them on in every good?

...بَل لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ (٥٦)

Nay, they do not understand.

C2911. Worldly wealth, power, and influence may be but trials. Let not their possessors think that they are in themselves things that will necessarily bring them happiness.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُم مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِم مُّشْفِقُونَ (٥٧)

57. Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord;

وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٨)

58. Those who believe in the Signs of their Lord;

وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ (٥٩)

59. Those who join not (in worship) partners with their Lord;

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوا وَّقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ (٦٠)

60. And those who dispense their charity with their hearts full of fear, because they will return to their Lord --

C2912. Their hearts are full of reverence for Allah and fear lest their charity or their hearts be not good enough for acceptance before their Lord; for they have the certainty of a future life, in which they will stand before the Judgment Seat. They fear for their own worthiness, but they hope in Faith.

أُولَٰئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ (٦١)

61. It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them.

وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

62. On no soul do We place a burden greater than it can bear:

C2913. Cf. 2:286 and n. 339 .

...وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ...

before Us is a record which clearly shows the truth:

C2914. The record speaks clearly, and shows exactly what each soul has done and thought, and what is due to it in justice.

The worst will receive full justice. The best will receive far more than their due: 28:84.

...وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٦٢)

they will never be wronged.

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا...

63. But their hearts are in confused ignorance of this;

C2915. This is said of the Unbelievers who rejected Faith and rejoiced in the vanities of this world. In spite of the proclamation of Truth, they are doubtful of the future Life and Judgment.

...وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِن دُونِ ذَٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عَامِلُونَ (٦٣)

and there are, besides that, deeds of theirs, which they will (continue) to do --

C2916. In addition to their rejection of Faith, they have against them positive deeds of wrong-doing, from which, on account of their contempt of the Light from Allah, they will not desist until they are sharply pulled up for punishment: and then repentance will be too late!

حَتَّى إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِم بِالْعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ يَجْأَرُونَ (٦٤)

64. Until, when We seize in Punishment those of them who received the good things of this world, behold, they will groan in supplication!

لَا تَجْأَرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّكُم مِّنَّا لَا تُنصَرُونَ (٦٥)

65. It will be said:

"Groan not in supplication this day; for ye shall certainly not be helped by Us.

قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَاتِي تُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنكِصُونَ (٦٦)

66. "My Signs used to be rehearsed to you, but ye used to turn back on your heels --

مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ بِهِ سَامِرًا تَهْجُرُونَ (٦٧)

67. "In arrogance: talking nonsense about the (Qur'án), like one telling fables by night."

C2917. Samir: one who remains awake by night, one who passes the night in talk or in the recital of stories of romances, a favourite amusement of the Days of Ignorance.

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءهُم مَّا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٦٨)

68. Do they not ponder over the Word (of Allah), or has anything (new) come to them that did not come to their fathers of old?

C2918. If they ponder over the matter, they will find that Allah's Message to humanity is as old as Adam. It is good for all ages. It never grows old, and it is never new.

أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنكِرُونَ (٦٩)

69. Or do they not recognize their Messenger, that they deny him?

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ...

70. Or do they say, "He is possessed"?

...بَلْ جَاءهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ (٧٠)

Nay, he has brought them the Truth, but most of them hate the Truth.

وَلَوِ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهِنَّ...

71. If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption!

C2919. Allah is All-Wise and All-Good, and His architecture of the universe is on a perfect Plan. If these poor, low, selfish, ignorant creatures were to plan it according to their hearts' desires, it would be a dreadful world, full of confusion and corruption.

...بَلْ أَتَيْنَاهُم بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَن ذِكْرِهِم مُّعْرِضُونَ (٧١)

Nay, We have sent them their admonition, but they turn away from their admonition.

... أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا

72. Or is it that thou askest them for some recompense?

C2920. This is the last of the questions, beginning with 23:68 above, showing the absurdity of the position taken up by the Unbelievers.

1. The Message of Allah is as old as humanity: why do they fight shy of it?
2. They have known their Prophet to be true and righteous: why do they deny him?
3. Is it madness to bring the bitter Truth before them?
4. Does the Prophet ask any worldly reward from them? If not, why do they reject his unselfish efforts for their own good?

... فَخَرَاجُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ...

But the recompense of thy Lord is best:

...وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (٧٢)

He is the Best of those who give sustenance.

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٧٣)

73. But verily thou callest them to the Straight Way;

وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَاكِبُونَ (٧٤)

74. And verily those who believe not in the Hereafter are deviating from that Way.

وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِم مِّن ضُرٍّ...

75. If We had mercy on them and removed the distress which is on them,

C2921. The reference is to a very severe famine felt in Makkah, which was attributed by the Unbelievers to the presence of the holy Prophet among them and his preaching against their gods.

As this is a Makkan Surah, the famine referred to must be that described by Ibn Kathir as having occurred in the 8th year of the Mission, say about four years before the Hijrah.

There was also a post-Hijrah famine, which is referred to by, Bukhari, but that was a later event.

لَّلَجُّوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (٧٥)...

they would obstinately persist in their transgression, wandering in distraction to and fro.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْعَذَابِ ...

76. We inflicted Punishment on them,

C2922. Some Commentators understand the battle of Badr to be meant here; if so, this particular verse would be of the Madinah period.

But it is better to understand it as referring to the same "distress" as in the preceding verse, or to punishments in general, which obstinate sinners refuse to take as warnings given to them to mend their ways and turn in repentance to Allah.

فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ (٧٦) ...

but they humbled not themselves to their Lord, nor do they submissively entreat (Him)! --

حَتَّى إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ (٧٧)

77. Until We open on them a gate leading to a severe Punishment: then

Lo! they will be plunged in despair therein!

C2923. Cf. 6:44.

If the little trials in the present life will not open their eyes, will great trials do so?

Unfortunately they only cause in the wicked a feeling of despair.

In the final Punishment after the Judgment, it will be too late for them to repent, and despair will be their only lot.

Section 5

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ...

78. It is He Who has created for you (the faculties of) hearing, sight, feeling and understanding:

C2924. As elsewhere, "heart" is to be understood as the seat both of feeling and intelligence.

'All the means by which knowledge can be gathered, judgment formed, and goodness cultivated, are provided for you by Allah. If you were grateful, you would use those in His service, which is expressed in your service to your fellow men. But instead you ignore these gifts, question Allah's Providence, and blaspheme against Him!'

...قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٨)

little thanks it is ye give!

وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٧٩)

79. And He has multiplied you through the earth, and to Him shall ye be gathered back.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ...

80. It is He Who gives life and death, and to Him (is due) the alternation of Night and Day:

C2925. The alternation of Night and Day stands here as a symbol for all the beneficent processes of Nature provided by Allah for the comfort and growth of man's outer and inner life.

أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٨٠)...

will ye not then understand?

بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ (٨١)

81. On the contrary they say things similar to what the ancients said.

C2926. And they are the more culpable, as they have received a later and completer revelation. Why should they now stand on the primitive ideas of their ancestors?

قَالُوا أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (٨٢)

82. They say:

"What! when we die and become dust and bones, could we really be raised up again?

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا هَٰذَا مِن قَبْلُ...

83. "Such things have been promised to us and to our fathers before!

إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٨٣)...

They are nothing but tales of the ancients!"

قُل لِّمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهَا إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨٤)

84. Say: "To whom belong the earth and all beings therein?

(Say) if ye know!"

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ...

85. They will say, "To Allah!"

قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٨٥)...

Say: "Yet will ye not receive admonition?"

C2927. If their argument is that such things about a future life cannot be known or proved, they are referred to the things which are actually before them. The tangible things of the earth;

- can they postulate their order or government except by a Power or Force or Energy outside them?

- They will admit that there is such a Power or Force or Energy. We call it Allah.
- Go a step further.

  We see a sublime Universe in the heavens above, stretching far, far beyond our ken. They will admit its existence and its grandeur.

  We ask them to entertain a feeling of reverence for the Power behind it, and to understand their own littleness and their dependence upon that Power.

قُلْ مَن رَّبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ (٨٦)

86. Say: "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, and the Lord of the Throne (of Glory) Supreme?"

C2928. Cf. 9:129.

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ...

87. They will say, "(They belong) to Allah."

...قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (٨٧)

Say: "Will ye not then be filled with awe?"

C2929. See n. 2927 above.

'If this great and glorious Universe inspires you with awe, surely the Power behind is more worthy of your awe, especially if you compare your dependence and its dependence upon Him.'

...قُلْ مَن بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

88. Say: "Who is it in whose hands is the governance of all things --

...وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ...

who protects (all), but is not protected (of any)?

...إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٨٨)

(Say) if ye know."

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ...

89. They will say, "(It belongs) to Allah."

قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُسْحَرُونَ (٨٩)

Say: "Then how are ye deluded?"

C2930. 'The order and unity of purpose in the Universe argue unity of design and goodness in its Maker.

Is it not then sheer madness for you to run after fancies and fail to understand and obey His Will?

It is delusion in you to seek other than Allah.'

بَلْ أَتَيْنَاهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (٩٠)

90. We have sent them the Truth: but they indeed practice Falsehood!

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِن وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ...

91. No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him:

...إِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَٰهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ...

(if there were many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what be had created, and some would have lorded it over others!

C2931. Cf. 17:42.

The multiplicity of gods is intellectually indefensible, considering the unity of Design and Purpose in His wonderful Universe.

...سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (٩١)

Glory to Allah (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him!

عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٩٢)

92. He knows what is hidden and what is open:

too high is He for the partners they attribute to Him!

C2932. To suppose that Allah has a son or family or partners or companions is to have a low idea of Allah, Who is high above all such relationships.

He is the One True God, and there can be none to compare with Him.

C.156 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(23:93-118)

Let us eschew evil, but not
Pay back evil in its own coin
However great the temptation: no chance
Will there be to retrieve our conduct,
Once death cuts us off. Then we shall only
Have to wait for Judgement: none can pass
That Barrier: our deeds will be weighed,
And happy those whose good weighs more
In the scale than ill. Only Faith and Goodness
Will prevail in the end: so glory to the Lord
Of the Throne exalted, of Mercy and Honour!

Section 6

قُل رَّبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيَنِّي مَا يُوعَدُونَ (٩٣)

93. Say:

"O my Lord! if Thou wilt show me (in my lifetime) that which they are warned against --

C2933. In the first instance, this applied to the holy Prophet. His subsequent Hijrah from Makkah and the eventual overthrow of the Makkan oligarchy amply prove the fulfilment of the prophecy.

But in general meaning it applies to all. We are taught that evil will be visited with a terrible punishment, not

only in a future life, but in this very life when its cup is full and the time comes for punishment in Allah's Plan. If it has to come while we are still on the scene of this life, we are asked to pray that we may not be found in the company of those who draw such punishment on themselves. In other words we must eschew the society of evil ones.

رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٩٤)

94. "Then, O my Lord! put me not amongst the people who do wrong!"

وَإِنَّا عَلَى أَن نُّرِيَكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَادِرُونَ (٩٥)

95. And We are certainly able to show thee (in fulfillment) that against which they are warned.

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةَ...

96. Repel evil with that which is best:

C2934. Whether people speak evil of you, in your presence or behind your back, or they do evil to you in either of those ways, all is known to Allah. It is not for you to punish.

Your best course is not to do evil in your turn, but to do what will best repel the evil. Two evils do not make a good.

Cf. 41:34, n. 4504.

...نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ (٩٦)

We are well-acquainted with the things they say.

وَقُل رَّبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ (٩٧)

97. And say:

"O my Lord! I seek refuge with Thee from the suggestions of the Evil Ones;

C2935. But in any case, shun evil for yourself, and you cannot do this without seeking the help and protection of Allah.

Not only must you shun all promptings of evil, but you must shun its proximity. It may be that in retaliating on evil, or even in your curiosity to discover what evil is, you may fall into evil yourself. You should avoid going near it or anything which brings it near to you. And in this matter you should seek Allah's help.

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَن يَحْضُرُونِ (٩٨)

98. "And I seek refuge with Thee, O my Lord! lest they should come near me."

حَتَّى إِذَا جَاء أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ ...

99. (In Falsehood will they be) until, when death comes to one of them, he says:

C2936. This verse I think connects on with 23:90 above.

Though Allah proclaims His Truth everywhere, the wicked cling to Falsehood until they face the reality of Death.

... رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ (٩٩)

"O my Lord! send me back (to life) --

C2937. The verb for **"send me back"** is in the plural in Arabic, which is construed either

- as an emphatic form, as if the singular were repeated, or
- as a plural of respect, though such a plural is not ordinarily used in addressing Allah, or
- as a plural addressed to the angels, after the address to Allah in "O my Lord!"

لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ...

100. "In order that I may work righteousness in the things I neglected." --

C2938. The unrighteous will ask for another chance. But it will be too late then. The time for repentance will then have passed.

...كَلَّا...

"By no means!

...إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا...

it is but a word he says,

C2939. Their request will mean nothing. It will be treated merely as an empty word of excuse.

They had plenty of chances in this life. Not only did they reject them, but they did not even believe in Allah or ask for His assistance.

...وَمِن وَرَائِهِم بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٠٠)

before them is a Partition till the Day they are raised up.

C2940. Barzakh:

- a partition,
- a bar or barrier;
- the place or state in which people will be after death and before Judgment.

Cf. 25:53 and 55:20.

Behind them is the barrier of death, and in front of them is the **Barzakh**, partition, a quiescent state until the judgment comes.

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءلُون (١٠١)

101. Then when the Trumpet is blown, there will be no more relationships between them that day, nor will one ask after another!

C2941. The old relationships of the world will then be dissolved. Each soul will stand on its merits.

فَمَن ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (١٠٢)

102. Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy -- they will attain salvation:

C2942. Good and evil deeds will be weighed against each other.

If the good deeds prevail, the soul will attain **falah**, i.e., prosperity, well-being, bliss, or salvation;

if the contrary, there will be the misery and anguish of Hell.

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ...

103. But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls;

C2943. The loss or perdition will not mean that they will die and feel no more: 14:17.

The punishment will mean nothing, if there was no sensibility, but total annihilation.

...فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ (١٠٣)

in Hell will they abide.

تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ (١٠٤)

104. The Fire will burn their faces, and they will therein grin, with their lips displaced.

C2944. That is to say, their faces will be disfigured with anguish, and their lips will quiver and fall out of place, exposing their teeth.

أَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنتُم بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ (١٠٥)

105. "Were not My Signs rehearsed to you, and ye did but treat them as falsehoods?"

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ (١٠٦)

106. They will say:

"Our Lord! our misfortune overwhelmed us and we became a people astray!

C2945. 'The evil in us conquered us; it was our misfortune that we surrendered to evil, and went astray.'

They forget that it was by their own deliberate choice that they surrendered to evil, and they are reminded in verses 109-110 of the ridicule with which they covered godly men in their life on earth.

رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ (١٠٧)

107. "Our Lord! bring us out of this:

if ever we return (to evil), then shall we be wrongdoers indeed!"

قَالَ اخْسَؤُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ (١٠٨)

108. He will say: "Be ye driven into it (with ignominy)! and speak ye not to Me!

C2946. After their flouting of Allah's Signs and their mockery of godly men on earth, they have forfeited their right to plead for mercy before Allah's Throne.

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ...

109. "A part of My servants there was, who used to pray,

...رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا...

'Our Lord! we believe; then do Thou forgive us, and have mercy upon us:

...وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (١٠٩)

for Thou art the best of those Who show mercy!'

فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا...

110. "But ye treated them with ridicule,

...حَتَّى أَنسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِي وَكُنتُم مِّنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ (١١٠)

so much so that (ridicule of) them made **you** forget My Message while ye were laughing at them!

C2947. Literally, 'they made you forget My Message'.

The ungodly were so occupied in the backbiting and ridicule of the godly that the godly themselves became the unconscious cause of the ungodly forgetting the

warnings declared by Allah against those who do not treat His Signs seriously.

Thus evil often brings about its own ruin through the instrumentality of those whom it would make its victims.

إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ (١١١)

111. "I have rewarded them this day for their patience and constancy: they are indeed the ones that have achieved Bliss..."

قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ (١١٢)

112. He will say: "What number of years did ye stay on earth?"

C2948. The Hafs reading is "Qala", "He will say". This follows the Kufa Qiraah.

The Basra Qiraat reads "Qul", "Say" (in the imperative).

The point is only one of grammatical construction.

See n. 2666 to 21:4. (R).

قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ...

113. They will say: "We stayed a day or part of a day:

C2949. The question and answer about Time imply two things.

1. The attention of the ungodly is drawn to the extremely short time of the life in this world, compared to the eternity which they face: they are made to see this, and to realise how mistaken they were in their comparative valuation of things spiritual and things material.

2. Time, as we know it now, will have faded away and appear as almost nothing. It is just a matter relative to this life of temporary probation.

   Cf. the experience of the Companions of the Cave: 18:19.

فَاسْأَلِ الْعَادِّينَ (١١٣)...

but ask those who keep account."

قَالَ إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا لَّوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١١٤)

114. He will say: "Ye stayed not but a little -- if ye had only known!

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ (١١٥)

115. "Did ye then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?"

C2950. Allah's Creation is not without a high serious purpose. It is not vain, or for mere play or sport.

As far as man is concerned, the highest issues for him hang on his behaviour in this life. "Life is real, life is earnest, And the grave is not its goal", as Longfellow truly says. We must therefore earnestly search out Allah's Truth, encouraged by the fact that Allah's Truth is also, out of His unbounded mercy, searching us out and trying to reach us.

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ...

116. Therefore exalted be Allah, the King, the Reality;

...لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ (١١٦)

there is no god but He, the Lord of the Throne of Honor!

وَمَن يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ عِندَ رَبِّهِ...

117. If anyone invokes, besides Allah, any other god, he has no authority therefor; and his reckoning will be only with his Lord!

C2951. Not with any one else whatever, as Allah is the Eternal Reality. If men, out of the figments of their imagination, fancy other gods, they will be rudely undeceived.

And Allah is Lord, i.e., our Cherisher as well as our Creator. In spite of all our shortcomings and our rebellions, He will forgive us if we go to Him not on our merits but on His grace. (R).

...إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ (١١٧)

And verily the Unbelievers will fail to win through!

C2952. See the same word used in describing the contrast with the Believers, in the first verse of this Surah. Righteousness must win and all opposition to it must fail. Thus the circle of the argument is completed.

وَقُل رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ...

118. So say:

"O my Lord! grant thou forgiveness and mercy!

...وَأَنتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (١١٨)

for Thou art the Best of those who show mercy!"

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاء

Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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Al Nur

النور

Introduction and Summary

The environmental and social influences which most frequently wreck our spiritual ideals have to do with sex especially with its misuse, whether in the form of unregulated behaviour, or false charges or scandals, or breach of the refined conventions of personal or domestic privacy. Our complete conquest of all pitfalls in such matters enables us to rise to the higher regions of Light and God-created Nature. This subject is continued in the next Surah. (R).

As the reprobation of false slanders about women (24:11-20) is connected with an incident that happened to Aisha in A.H. 5-6 that fixes the chronological place of this Madinah Surah.

Summary- Sex offences should be severely punished, but the strictest evidence should be required, and false slanderers are also worthy of punishment. Light talk about women is reprobated (24:1-26, and C. 157).

Privacy should be respected, and the utmost decorum should be observed in dress and manners (24:27-34, and C. 158).

Parable of light and Darkness; order and obedience in Nature point to the spiritual duty of man (24:35-57, and C. 159).

Domestic manners and manners in public or collective life all contribute to the highest virtues, and are part of our spiritual duties leading up to Allah (24:58-64, and C. 160).

C.157 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(24:1-26)

Chastity is a virtue, for men and women.
Whether joined in marriage, or single,
Or widowed. The punishment for offences
In such matters should be public. No less
Grave is the launching of false charges
Or rumours against the fair reputation
Of women, or the spreading of such
Slanders, or the facile belief in them.
Evil is ever spreading its net,
Good men and women should ever be
On their guard, and pray for Allah's grace and mercy.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سُورَةٌ أَنزَلْنَاهَا وَفَرَضْنَاهَا...

1. A Surah which We have sent down and which We have ordained:

C2953. It must not be thought that the checking of sex offences or of minor improprieties, that relate to sex or privacy, are matters that do not affect spiritual life in the highest degree. These matters are intimately connected with spiritual teaching such as Allah has sent down in this Surah.

The emphasis is on **"We"**: these things are not mere matters of convenience, but Allah has ordained them for our observance in life.

...وَأَنزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (١)

in it have We sent down Clear Signs, in order that ye may receive admonition.

الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي ...

2. The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication --

C2954. Zina includes sexual intercourse between a man and a woman not married to each other.

It therefore applies both to adultery (which implies that one or both of the parties are married to a person or persons other than the ones concerned) and to fornication, which, in its strict signification, implies that both parties are unmarried.

The law of marriage and divorce is made easy in Islam, so that there may be the less temptation for intercourse outside the well-defined incidents of marriage. This makes for greater self-respect for both man and woman.

Other sex offences are also punishable, but this Section applies strictly to **Zina** as above defined.

[Although Zina covers both fornication and adultery, in the opinion of Muslim justice, the punishment laid down here applies only to un-married persons. As for married

persons, their punishment, according to the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him), is stoning to death. (Eds.)]

... فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِئَةَ جَلْدَةٍ...

flog each of them with a hundred stripes:

C2955. Cf. 4:15, and n. 523.

...وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُم بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ...

let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day:

...وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢)

and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment.

C2956. The punishment should be open, in order to be deterrent.

الزَّانِي لَا يَنكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً...

3. Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry any but a woman similarly guilty,

...وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ...

or an Unbeliever nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman:

...وَحُرِّمَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣)

to the Believers such a thing is forbidden.

C2957. Islam commands sex purity, for men and for women, at all times,

- before marriage, during marriage, and after the dissolution of marriage.

Those guilty of illicit practices are shut out of the marriage circle of chaste men and women.

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ...

4. And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses, (to support their allegation) --

...فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا...

flog them with eighty stripes: and reject their evidence ever after:

C2958. The most serious notice is taken of people who put forward slanders or scandalous suggestions about women without adequate evidence.

If anything is said against a woman's chastity, it should be supported by evidence twice as strong as would ordinarily be required for business transactions, or even in murder cases. That is, four witnesses would be required instead of two. Failing such preponderating evidence, the slanderer should himself be treated as a wicked transgressor and punished with eighty stripes. Not only would he be subjected to this disgraceful form of punishment, but he would be deprived of the citizen's right of giving evidence in all matters unless he repents and reforms, in which case he can be readmitted to be a competent witness.

The verse lays down the punishment for slandering **"chaste women"**, which by consensus of opinion also covers slandering chaste men.

Chaste women have been specifically mentioned, according to Commentators, because slandering them is more abhorrent. (Eds).

...وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٤)

for such men are wicked transgressors --

... إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا

5. Unless they repent thereafter and mend (their conduct):

C2959. The punishment of stripes is inflicted in any case for unsupported slander. But the deprivation of the civic right of giving evidence can be cancelled by the man's subsequent conduct, if he repents, shows that he is sorry for what he did, and that he would not in future support by his statement anything for which he has not the fullest evidence.

Secular courts do not enforce these principles, as their standards are lower than those which good Muslims set

for themselves, but good Muslims must understand and act on the underlying principles, which protect the honour of womanhood.

Abu Hanifa considers that neither the stripes nor the incompetence for giving future evidence is cancelled by repentance, but only the spiritual stigma of being "wicked transgressors". This of course is the more serious punishment, though it cannot be enforced in the Courts.

... فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٥)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

...وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُمْ شُهَدَاء إِلَّا أَنفُسُهُمْ

6. And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have (in support) no evidence but their own --

C2960. The case of married persons is different from that of outsiders. If one of them accuses the other of unchastity, the accusation partly reflects on the accuser as well.

Moreover, the link which unites married people, even where differences supervene, is sure to act as a steadying influence against the concoction of false charges of unchastity particularly where divorce is allowed (as in Islam) for reasons other than unchastity.

Suppose a husband catches a wife in adultery. In the nature of things four witnesses - or even one outside witness - would be impossible. Yet after such an experience it is against human nature that he can live a normal married life. The matter is then left to the honour of the two spouses.

If the husband can solemnly swear four times to the fact, and in addition invoke a curse on himself if he lies, that is prima facie evidence of the wife's guilt. But if the wife swears similarly four times and similarly invokes a curse on herself, she is in law acquitted of the guilt. If she does not take this step, the charge is held proved and the punishment follows.

In either case the marriage is dissolved, as it is against human nature that the parties can live together happily after such an incident.

...فَشَهَادَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ أَرْبَعُ شَهَادَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٦)

their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth;

وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِن كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٧)

7. And the fifth (oath) (should be) that they solemnly invoke the curse of Allah on themselves if they tell a lie.

...وَيَدْرَأُ عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَرْبَعَ شَهَادَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ

8. But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times (with an oath) by Allah,

...إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٨)

that (her husband) is telling a lie;

وَالْخَامِسَةَ أَنَّ غَضَبَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا إِن كَانَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٩)

9. And the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly invokes the wrath of Allah on herself if (her accuser) is telling the truth.

...وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ

10. If it were not for Allah's grace and mercy on you,

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٠)

and that Allah is Oft-Returning, Full of Wisdom -- (ye would be ruined indeed).

C2961. Cf. 24:11-14, and n. 2962, which illustrates the matter by a concrete instance.

Section 2

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاؤُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنكُمْ

11. Those who brought forward the lie are a body among yourselves:

C2962. The particular incident here referred to occurred on the return from the expedition to the Banui Mustaliq, A.H. 5-6.

When the march was ordered, Hadhrat Aisha was not in her tent, having gone to search for a valuable necklace she had dropped. As her litter was veiled, it was not noticed that she was not in it, until the army reached the next halt. Meanwhile, finding the camp had gone, she sat down to rest, hoping that some one would come back to fetch her when her absence was noticed.

It was night, and she fell asleep. Next morning she was found by Safwan, a Muhajir, who had been left behind the camp expressly to pick up anything inadvertently left behind. He put her on his camel and brought her, leading the camel on foot.

This gave occasion to enemies to raise a malicious scandal. The ringleader among them was the chief of Madinah Hypocrites, Abdullah ibn Ubai, who is referred to in the last clause of this verse.

He had other sins and enormities to his debit, and he was left to the punishment of an unrepentant sinner, for he died in that state. The minor tools were given the legal punishment of the law, and after penitence mended their lives. They made good.

...لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ...

think it not to be an evil to you: on the contrary it is good for you:

C2963. It is worse for a scandal to be whispered about with bated breath, than that it should be brought into the light of day and disproved.

...لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُم مَّا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ...

to every man among them (will come the punishment) of the sin that he earned,

...وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١١)

and to him who took on himself the lead among them, will be a Penalty grievous.

C2964. The ringleader: see n. 2962 above.

لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا...

12. Why did not Believers -- men and women -- when ye heard of the affair -- put the best construction on it in their own minds

C2965. Both men and women were involved in spreading the scandal. Their obvious duty was to put the best, not the worst, construction on the acts of one of the "mothers of the Believers".

...وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٢)

and say, "This (charge) is an obvious lie"?

لَوْلَا جَاؤُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاء...

13. Why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it?

C2966. If any persons took it seriously, it was their duty to search for and produce the evidence, in the absence of which they themselves became guilty of slander.

...فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاء فَأُوْلَئِكَ عِندَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ (١٣)

When they have not brought the witnesses, such men, in the sight of Allah, (stand forth) themselves as liars!

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

14. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, in this world and the Hereafter,

...لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٤)

a grievous penalty would have seized you in that ye rushed glibly into this affair.

C2967. Cf. 24:10 above.

It was Allah's mercy that saved them from many evil consequences, both in this life and in the Hereafter,

- in this life, because the Prophet's wise measures nipped in the bud any incipient estrangement between those nearest and dearest to him, and
- from a spiritual aspect in that the minor agents in spreading the scandal repented and were forgiven.

No doubts and divisions, no mutual distrust, were allowed to remain in their hearts after the whole matter had been cleared up.

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُم مَّا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

15. Behold, ye received it on your tongues, and said out of your mouths things of which ye had no knowledge;

...وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِندَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ (١٥)

and ye thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah.

C2968. There are three things here reprobated by way of moral teaching:

1. if others speak an evil word, that is no reason why you should allow it to defile your tongue;
2. if you get a thought or suspicion which is not based on your certain knowledge, do not give it currency by giving it expression; and
3. others may think it is a small matter to speak lightly of something which blasts a person's character or reputation: in the eyes of Allah it is a most serious matter in any case, but specially when it involves the honour and reputation of pious women.

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُم مَّا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَن نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا...

16. And why did ye not, when ye heard it, say --

"It is not right of us to speak of this:

...سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٦)

Glory to Allah!

this is a most serious slander!"

C2969. The right course would have been to stop any further currency of false slanders by ignoring them and at least refusing to help in their circulation.

The exclamation **"Subhanaka"**, "Praise to Thee (O Allah)", or "Glory to Allah!" is an exclamation of surprise and disavowal as much as to say,

"We do not believe it! And we shall have nothing to do with you, 0 false slanderers!"

يَعِظُكُمُ اللَّهُ أَن تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٧)

17. Allah doth admonish you, that ye may never repeat such (conduct), if ye are (true) Believers.

وَيُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ...

18. And Allah makes the Signs plain to you:

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٨)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَن تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

19. Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers,

...لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

will have a grievous Penalty in this life and in the Hereafter:

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (١٩)

Allah knows, and ye know not.

C2970. What mischief's can be planned by Evil to delude simple folk who mean no harm in their own minds but who by thoughtlessness are deluded step by step to become the instruments of Evil, may not be known to the most instructed of men, but it is all known to Allah.

Man should therefore always be on his guard against the traps of Evil, and it is only Allah's grace that can save him.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّه رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ (٢٠)

20. Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, and that Allah is full of kindness and mercy (ye would be ruined indeed).

C2971. Note the refrain that comes four times in this passage, "Were it not for the grace and, mercy of Allah ..... Each time it has a different application.

1. In 24:10, it was in connection with the accusation of infidelity by the man against his wife, they were both reminded of Allah's mercy and warned against suspicion and untruth.
2. In 24:14, the Believers were told to be wary of false rumours lest they should cause pain and division among themselves: it is Allah's grace that keeps them united.
3. Here is an admonition for the future:

   there may be conspiracies and snares laid by evil against simple people; it is Allah's grace that protects them.
4. In 14:21, the general warning is directed to the observance of purity in act and in thought, concerning one's self and concerning others: it is only Allah's grace that can keep that purity spotless, for He hears prayers and knows of all the snares that are spread in the path of the good.

Section 3

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ...

21. O ye who believe! follow not Satan's footsteps:

...وَمَن يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ...

if any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he will (but) command what is shameful and wrong:

...وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنكُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا...

and were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, not one of you would ever have been pure:

C2972. See last note.

...وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ...

but Allah doth purify whom He pleases:

C2973. Spotless purity in thought, word, and deed, includes the disposition to put the best construction on

the motives of others, so that we ascribe no evil motive to the seeming indiscretions of virtuous people.

Such a high standard can only come by the grace of Allah, Who hears all prayers and knows all the temptations to which human nature is subject. His Will and Plan make both for spiritual protection and spiritual peace, and we must place ourselves trustingly in His hands.

...وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢١)

and Allah is One Who hears and knows (all things).

...وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَن يُؤْتُوا

22. Let not those among you who are endued with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping

C2974. The immediate reference was to Hadhrat Abu Bakr, the father of Hadhrat Aisha. He was blessed both with spiritual grace from Allah and with ample mean; which he always used in the service of Islam and of Muslims.

One of the slanderers of Hadhrat Aisha turned out to be Mistah, a cousin of Hadhrat Abu Bakr, whom he had been in the habit of supporting. Naturally Hadhrat Abu Bakr wished to stop that aid, but according to the highest standards of Muslim ethics he was asked to forgive and forget, which he did, with the happiest results to the peace and unity of the Muslim community.

But the general application holds good for all time. A generous patron should not, in personal anger, withdraw his support even for serious faults if the delinquent repents and mends his ways.

If Allah forgives us, who are we to refuse forgiveness to our fellows?

...أُولِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

their kinsmen, those in want, and those who have left their homes in Allah's cause:

...وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا...

let them forgive and overlook:

...أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ...

do you not wish that Allah should forgive you?

...وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٢)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

23. Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing,

C2975. Good women are sometimes indiscreet because they think of no evil. But even such innocent indiscretion lands them, and those who hold them dear, in difficulties. Such was the case with Hadhrat Aisha, who was in extreme pain and anguish for a whole month because of the slanders spread about her.

Her husband and her father were also placed in a most awkward predicament, considering their position and the great work in which they were engaged.

But unprincipled people, who start false slanders, and their unthinking tools who help in spreading such slanders, are guilty of the gravest spiritual offence, and their worst punishment is the deprivation of Allah's grace, which is the meaning of a state of Curse.

...لُعِنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢٣)

are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter:

for them is a grievous Penalty -

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٤)

24. On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions.

C2976. Our own limbs and faculties are the strongest witnesses against us if we misuse them for evil deeds instead of using them for the good deeds for which they were given to us.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوَفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ...

25. On that Day Allah will pay them back (all) their just dues,

...وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ (٢٥)

and they will realize that Allah is the (very) Truth, that makes all things manifest.

C2977. All that we thought of hiding will be clear as day before Allah's Judgment Seat, because He is the very essence of Truth and Reality. He is the true Light (24:35), of which all physical light is merely a type or reflection.

الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ...

26. Women impure are for men impure, and men impure are for women impure;

...وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ...

and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity:

...أُولَٰئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ...

these are not affected by what people say:

C2978. The pure consort with the pure, and the impure with the impure. If the impure, out of the impurity of their thoughts, or imaginations, impute any evil to the pure, the pure are not affected by it, but they should avoid all occasions for random talk.

...لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٢٦)

for them there is forgiveness, and a provision honorable.

C2979. Forgiveness for any indiscretion which they may have innocently committed, and spiritual provision or protection against the assaults of Evil.

It is also meant that the more evil ones attempt to defame or slander them, the more triumphantly will they be vindicated and provided with the physical and moral good which will advance their real life.

C.158 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(24:27-34)

Privacy in the home is a nature of virtue:
Respect it with dignity and decorum. Guard
You eyes and thoughts with rules of modesty
In dress and manners; and learn from these
To keep your spiritual gaze from straying
To any but Allah. True marriage should teach
Us charity and purity, and such
Are the virtues which lead us to the Light
Sublime which illuminates the world.

Section 4

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

27. O ye who believe!

... لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْنِسُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَهْلِهَا...

enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them:

...ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٧)

that is best for you in order that ye may heed (what is seemly).

C2980. The conventions of propriety and privacy are essential to a refined life of goodness and purity.

The English saying that an Englishman's home is his castle, suggests a certain amount of exclusiveness and defiance.

The Muslim principle of asking respectful permission and exchanging salutations ensures privacy without exclusiveness, and friendliness without undue familiarity.

فَإِن لَّمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ...

28. If ye find no one in the house, enter not until permission is given to you:

C2981. That is, if no one replies;

- there may be people in the house not in a presentable state. Or,
- even if the house is empty, you have no right to enter it until you obtain the owner's permission, wherever he may be.

The fact of your not receiving a reply does not entitle you to enter without permission. You should wait, or knock twice or three times, and withdraw in case no permission is received.

If you are actually asked to withdraw, as the inmates are not in a condition to receive you, you should a fortiori withdraw, either for a time, or altogether, as the inmates may wish you to do.

Even if they are your friends, you have no right to take them by surprise or enter against their wishes. Your own purity of life and conduct as well as of motives is thus tested.

...وَإِن قِيلَ لَكُمُ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا...

if ye are asked to go back, go back:

...هُوَ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ...

that makes for greater purity for yourselves:

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ (٢٨)...

and Allah knows well all that ye do.

لَّيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَن تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ...

29. It is no fault on your part to enter houses not used for living in, which serve some (other) use for you:

C2982. The rule about dwelling-houses is strict, because privacy is precious, and essential to a refined, decent, and well-ordered life.

Such a rule of course does not apply to houses used for other useful purposes, such as an inn or caravanserai, or a shop, or a warehouse. But even here, of course, implied permission from the owner is necessary as a matter of common-sense.

The question in this passage is that of refined privacy, not that of rights of ownership.

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ (٢٩)

and Allah has knowledge of what ye reveal and what ye conceal.

...قُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ

30. Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty:

C2983. The rule of modesty applies to men as well as women. A brazen stare by a man at a woman (or even at a man) is a breach of refined manners.

Where sex is concerned, modesty is not only "good form": it is not only to guard the weaker sex, but also to guard the spiritual good of the stronger sex.

...ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ...

that will make for greater purity for them:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ (٣٠)

and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.

...وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

31. And say to the believing women

...يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ ...

that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty;

C2984. The need for modesty is the same in both men and women. But on account of the differentiation of the sexes in nature, temperaments, and social life, a greater amount of privacy is required for women than for men, especially in the matter of dress and the uncovering of the bosom.

...وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا...

that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof;

C2985. Zinat means both natural beauty and artificial ornaments.

I think both are implied here, but chiefly the former. The woman is asked not to make a display of her figure except to the following classes of people:

- her husband,
- her near relatives whom a certain amount of *neglige'* is permissible;
- her women,
- slaves, male and female, as they would be in constant attendance; but this item would now be blank, with the abolition of slavery;
- men who are free from sexual desire and who usually frequent the houses; and
- infants or small children before they get a sense of sex. Cf. also 33: 59.

...وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ...

that they should draw their veils over their bosoms

...وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا...

and not display their beauty except

...لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ...

to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers,

...أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ...

their sons, their husbands' sons,

...أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ ...

their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons,

...أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ...

or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess,

...أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُوْلِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ...

or male servants free of physical needs,

...أَوِ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ...

or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex;

...وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِن زِينَتِهِنَّ...

and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments.

C2986. It is one of the tricks of showy or unchaste women to tinkle their ankle ornaments, to draw attention to themselves,

...وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٣١)

And O ye Believers! turn ye al together towards Allah, that ye may attain Bliss.

C2987. While all these details of the purity and good form of domestic life are being brought to our attention, we are clearly reminded that the chief object we should hold in view is our spiritual welfare.

All our brief life on this earth is a probation, and we must make our individual, domestic, and social life all contribute to our holiness, so that we can get the real success and bliss which is the aim of our spiritual endeavour. (R).

...وَأَنكِحُوا الْأَيَامَى مِنكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ

32. Marry those among you who are single, or the virtuous ones among your slaves, male or female:

C2988. The subject of sex ethics and manners brings us to the subject of marriage.

Single (ayama, plural of Aiyim) here means any one not in the bond of wedlock, whether unmarried or lawfully divorced, or widowed.

If we can, we must marry in our own circle, but if we have not the means, there is no harm if we choose from a lower circle, provided our choice is determined by virtue. Poverty in the other party does not matter if there is virtue and love. A happily married man has the best wealth in a virtuous wife, and his very happiness make him a better potential earner of wealth. A slave becomes free by marriage.

...إِن يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاء يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

if they are in poverty, Allah will give them means out of His grace:

...وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٣٢)

for Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things.

C2989. Cf. 5:57.

Allah's mercy is for all: it is not confined to a class or grade of people.

وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

33. Let those who find not the wherewithal for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace.

C2990. A Muslim marriage requires some sort of a dower for the wife. If the man cannot afford that, he must wait and keep himself chaste.

It is no excuse for him to say that he must satisfy his natural cravings within or outside marriage. It must be within marriage.

...وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ

فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا...

And if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (to enable them to earn their freedom for a certain sum), give them such a deed if ye know any good in them;

C2991. The law of slavery in the legal sense of the term is now obsolete. While it had any meaning, Islam made the slave's lot as easy as possible.

A slave, male or female, could ask for conditional manumission by a written deed fixing the amount required for manumission and allowing the slave meanwhile to earn money by lawful means. Such a deed was not to be refused if the request was genuine and the slave had character.

Not only that, but the master is directed to help with money out of his own resources in order to enable the slave to earn his or her own liberty.

...وَآتُوهُم مِّن مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ...

yea, give them something yourselves out of the means which Allah has given to you.

...وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا فَتَيَاتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ ...

But force not your maids to prostitution

C2992. Where slavery was legal, what is now called the "white slave traffic" was carried on by wicked people like 'Abdullah ibn Ubai, the Hypocrite leader at Madinah. This is absolutely condemned.

While modern nations have abolished ordinary slavery, the "White Slave Traffic" is still a big social problem in individual States. Here it is absolutely condemned. No more despicable trade can be imagined. (R).

... إِنْ أَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

when they desire chastity, in order that ye may make a gain in the goods of this life.

C2993. I have translated *"In"* (literally, -if") by -when- because this is not a conditional clause but an explanatory clause, explaining the meaning of 'force'.

"Forcing" a person necessarily means that it is against the wish or inclination of the person forced. Even if they were to give a formal consent, it is not validbecause the persons concerned are in (legal, or now) economic slavery.

...وَمَن يُكْرِههُّنَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِن بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣٣)

But if anyone compels them, yet, after such compulsion, is Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (to them).

C2994. The poor unfortunate girls, who are victims of such a nefarious trade, will yet find mercy from Allah, whose bounties extend to all His creatures.

...وَلَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ مُّبَيِّنَاتٍ...

34. We have already sent down to you verses making things clear,

...وَمَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٤)

an illustration from (the story of) people who passed away before you, and an admonition for those who fear (Allah).

C2995. This prepares the way for the magnificent Verse of Light that follows, and its sublime meaning. (R).

C.159 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(24:35-57)

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
High above our petty evanescent lives.
He illumines our souls with means that reach
Our inmost being. Universal is
His Light, so pure and so intense
That grosser beings need a veil
To take His rays: His elect are e'er
Absorbed in prayer and praise and deeds
Of love, unlike the children of Darkness,
Struggling in Depths profound of vanities
False. All Nature sings to the glory
Of Allah, and men of fraud and hypocrisy
Are but rebels in the Kingdom of Allah.

Section 5

اللَّهُ نُورُ ...

35. Allah is the Light ...

C2996. Embedded within certain directions concerning a refined domestic and social life, comes this glorious parable of light, which contains layer upon layer of transcendent truth about spiritual mysteries.

No notes can do adequate justice to its full meaning. Volumes have been written on this subject. In these notes I propose to explain the simplest meaning of this passage. (R).

... السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

... of the heavens and the earth.

C2997. The physical light is but a reflection of the true Light in the world of Reality, and that true Light is Allah.

We can only think of Allah in terms of our phenomenal experience, and in the phenomenal world, light is the purest thing we know, but physical light has drawbacks incidental to its physical nature: e.g.

- it is dependent upon some source external to itself;
- it is a passing phenomenon; if we take it to be a form of motion or energy it is unstable, like all physical phenomena;
- it is dependent on space and time;

  its speed is 186,000 miles per second, and there are stars whose light takes thousands of years before it reaches the earth.

The perfect Light of Allah is free from any such defects. (R).

...مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ...

The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a lamp:

...الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ...

the Lamp enclosed in Glass:

C2998. The first three points in the Parable centre round the symbols of the Niche, the Lamp, and the Glass.

1. The **Niche (Mishkat)** is the little shallow recess in the wall of an Eastern house, fairly high from the ground, in which a light (before the days of electricity) was usually placed. Its height enabled it to diffuse the light in the room and minimised the shadows.

   The background of the wall and the sides of the niche helped to throw the light well into the room, and if the wan was white-washed, it also acted as a reflector: the opening in front made the way for the light.

   So with the spiritual Light; it is placed high, above worldly things; it has a niche or habitation of its own, in Revelation and other Signs of Allah; its access to men is by a special Way, open to all, yet closed to those who refuse its rays.

2. The Lamp is the core of the spiritual Truth, which is the real illumination; the Niche is nothing without it; the Niche is actually made for it.

3. The Glass is the transparent medium through which the Light passes. On the one hand, it protects the light from moths and other forms of low life and from gusts of wind, and on the other, it transmits the fight through a medium which is made up of and akin to the grosser substances of the earth (such as sand, soda, potash, etc.), so arranged as to admit the subtle to the gross by its transparency.

   So the spiritual Truth has to be filtered through human language or human intelligence to make it intelligible to mankind.

...الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ...

the glass as it were a brilliant star:

C2999. The glass by itself does not shine. But when the light comes into it, it shines like a brilliant star.

So men of God, who preach Allah's Truth, are themselves illuminated by Allah's light and become the illuminating media through which that Light spreads and permeates human life.

...يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونِةٍ...

lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive,

C3000. The olive tree is not a very impressive tree in its outward appearance. Its leaves have a dull greenish-brown colour, and in size it is inconspicuous. But its oil is used in sacred ceremonies and forms a wholesome ingredient of food. The fruit has a specially fine flavour.

Cf. n. 2880 to 23:20.

For the illuminating quality of its oil, see n. 3002 below.

...لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ...

neither of the East nor of the West,

C3001. This mystic Olive is not localised. It is neither of the East nor of the West. It is universal, for such is Allah's Light.

As applied to the olive, there is also a more literal meaning, which can be allegorised in a different way.

An olive tree with an eastern aspect gets only the rays of the morning sun; one with a western aspect, only the rays of the western sun. In the northern hemisphere the south aspect will give the sun's rays a great part of the day, while a north aspect will shut them out altogether, and vice versa in the southern hemisphere.

But a tree in the open plain or on a hill will get perpetual sunshine by day; it will be more mature, and the fruit and oil will be of superior quality. So Allah's light is not localised or immature: it is perfect and universal.

...يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ...

whose Oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it:

C3002. Pure olive oil is beautiful in colour, consistency, and illuminating power.

The world has tried all kinds of illuminants, and for economic reasons or convenience, one replaces another. But for coolness, comfort to the eyes, and steadiness, vegetable oils are superior to electricity, mineral oils, and animal oils.

And among vegetable oils, olive oil takes a high place and deserves its sacred associations. Its purity is almost like light itself: you may suppose it to be almost light before it is lit.

So with spiritual Truth: it illuminates the mind and understanding imperceptibly, almost before the human mind and heart have been consciously touched by it.

...نُّورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ...

Light upon Light!

...يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاء...

Allah doth guide whom He will to His Light.

...وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ...

Allah doth set forth Parables for men:

...وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٣٥)

and Allah doth know all things.

C3003. Glorious, illimitable Light, which cannot be described or measured. And there are grades and grades of it, passing transcendently into regions of spiritual height, which man's imagination can scarcely conceive of. The topmost pinnacle is the true prototypal Light, the real Light, of which all others were reflections, the Light of Allah. Hence the saying of the Holy Prophet about Allah's "Seventy thousand veils of Light".

... فِي بُيُوتٍ

36. (Lit is such a light) in houses,

C3004. The punctuation of the Arabic text makes it necessary to carry back the adverbial clause **"in houses"**, to something in the last verse, say "Lit from a blessed Tree", the intervening clauses being treated as parenthetical.

... أَذِنَ اللَّهُ أَن تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ...

which Allah hath permitted to be raised to honor; for the celebration, in them of His name:

C3005. That is, in all places of pure worship;

but some Commentators understand special Mosques, such as the Ka'bah in Makkah or Mosques in Madinah or Jerusalem; for these are specially held in honour.

...يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ (٣٦)

in them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again) --

C3006. In the evenings: the Arabic word is **Asal**, a plural of a plural, to imply emphasis:

I have rendered that shade of meaning by adding the words "again and again".

... رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

37. By men whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the Remembrance of Allah,

C3007. "Remembrance of Allah" is wider than Prayer: it includes;

- silent contemplation, and
- active service of Allah and His creatures.

... وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ

nor from regular Prayer, nor from the practice of regular Charity:

The regular Prayers and regular Charity are the social acts performed through the organised community.

...يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ (٣٧)

their (only) fear is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed (in a world wholly new) --

C3008. Some renderings suggest the effects of terror on the Day of Judgment. But here we are considering the case of the righteous, whose **"fear"** of Allah is akin to love and reverence and who (as the next verse shows) hope for the best reward from Allah. But the world they will meet will be a wholly changed one.

...لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ

38. That Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds, and add even more for them out of His Grace:

C3009. The best of the righteous do not deserve the reward that they get: all their faults are forgiven, and only their best actions are considered in the reward that they get.

Nay, more!

Out of the unbounded Grace of Allah even more is added to them. For in giving rewards, Allah's bounty is boundless.

...وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٨)

for Allah doth provide for those whom He will, without measure.

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً

39. But the Unbelievers -- their deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water;

C3010. We have had various metaphors to give us an idea of the beneficent Light of Allah. Now we have contrasted metaphors to enable us to see those who deny or refuse that Light, and are overwhelmed in utter darkness.

The Light (of Allah) is an absolute Reality, and is mentioned first, and the souls that follow that Light are a reflected reality and are mentioned after the Light.

On the other hand the Darkness is not a reality in itself, but a negation of reality; the reflected existences that refuse the Light are mentioned, and then their state, which is Unreality.

Two metaphors are given:

- a mirage, in this verse,
- and the depths of darkness in the sea, in the next,

...حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا ...

until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing:

C3011. The mirage, of which I have seen several instances in the Arabian deserts and in Egypt, is a strange phenomenon of illusion. It is a trick of our vision.

In the language of our Parable, it rejects the Light which shows us the Truth, and deceives us with Falsehood.

A lonely traveller in a desert, nearly dying of thirst, sees a broad sheet of water. He goes in that direction, lured on and on, but finds nothing at all. He dies in protracted agony.

... وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ حِسَابَهُ...

but he finds Allah (ever) with him, and Allah will pay him his account:

C3012. The rebel against Allah finds himself like the man deluded by a mirage. The Truth which he rejected is always with him. The mirage which he accepted leads to his destruction.

...وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٣٩)

and Allah is swift in taking account.

...أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ

40. Or (the Unbelievers' state) is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean,

...يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ...

overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by (dark) clouds:

C3013. What a graphic picture of darkness in the depths of the Ocean, wave upon wave, and on top of all, dense dark clouds!

There is so little light even in ordinary depths of the Ocean that fishes which live there lose their eyes as useless organs.

...ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ...

depths of darkness, one above another:

C3014. A contrast to "Light upon Light" in 24:35 above.

... إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرَاهَا...

if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it!

...وَمَن لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ (٤٠)

for any to whom Allah giveth not light, there is no light!

C3015. The true source of Light in the world of Reality is Allah, and anyone who cuts himself off from that Light is in utter darkness indeed, for it is the negation of the only true light, and not merely relative darkness, like that which we see, say, in the shadows of moonlight.

Section 6

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

41. Seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praises all beings in the heavens and on earth do celebrate,

C3016. Cf. 21:19-20.

... وَالطَّيْرُ صَافَّاتٍ...

and the birds (of the air) with wings outspread?

C3017. All denizens of the heavens, such as angels, all denizens of the earth (including the waters) such as man, animals, insects, fishes, etc., and all denizens of the air, such as birds, celebrate the praises of Allah.

Each has his own mode of prayer and praise. It is not necessarily with words, for language (as we know it) is peculiar to man. But actions and other modes of self-expression recognise and declare the Glory of Allah.

...كُلٌّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ...

Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise.

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٤١)

And Allah knows well all that they do.

...وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

42. Yea, to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth;

...وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ (٤٢)

and to Allah is the final goal (of all).

C3018. From Him we are; To Him we belong; and to Him we shall return. Not only we, but all Creation, proclaims this in the whole world.

...أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُزْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَامًا...

43. Seest thou not that Allah makes the clouds move gently, then joins them together, then makes them into a heap? --

...فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ...

then wilt thou see rain issue forth from their midst.

C3019. Artists, or lovers of nature, or observers of clouds will appreciate this description of cloud effects-

> thin clouds floating about in fantastic shapes, joining together and taking body and substance, then emerging as heavy clouds heaped up, which condense and pour forth their rain. Then the heavy dark clouds in the upper regions, that bring hail,-
>
> how distinct and yet how similar!

They are truly like mountain masses! And when the hailstones fall, how local their area! It hits some localities and leaves free others almost interlaced!

And the lightning- how blinding flashes come from thunderous clouds!

In this Book of Nature can we not see the hand of the powerful and beneficent Allah?

...وَيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِن جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِن بَرَدٍ...

And He sends down from the sky mountain masses (of clouds) wherein is hail:

...فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَصْرِفُهُ عَن مَّن يَشَاءُ...

He strikes therewith whom He pleases and He turns it away fro whom He pleases.

...يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهِ يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَارِ (٤٣)

The vivid flash of His lightning well-nigh blinds the sight.

...يُقَلِّبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ...

44. It is Allah Who alternates the Night and the Day:

C3020. His power, wisdom, and goodness are shown no less in the regular phenomena of nature like the succession of Day and Night, than in the seasonal or seemingly irregular movements of clouds and rain and hail and lightning.

Those who have the spiritual vision can read this Book of Allah with delight and instruction.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ (٤٤)

verily in these things is an instructive example for those who have vision!

...وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِن مَّاءٍ...

45. And Allah has created every animal from water:

C3021. Cf. 21:30, n. 2691.

Protoplasm is the basis of all living matter, and "the vital power of protoplasm seems to depend on the constant presence of water".

...فَمِنْهُم مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ...

of them there are some that creep on their bellies;

...وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ...

some that walk on two legs; and some that walk on four.

C3022. The creeping things include worms and lowly forms of animal life as well as reptiles (like snakes), centipedes, spiders, and insects. Where these have legs they are small, and the description of creeping or crawling is more applicable to them than that of walking.

Fishes and sea-animals generally cannot be said to walk: their swimming is like "creeping on their bellies".

Two-legged animals include birds and man.

Most of the mammals walk on four legs. This includes the whole of the animal world.

...يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ...

Allah creates what He wills:

C3023. In Allah's Will and Plan, the variety of forms and habits among animals is adapted to their various modes of life and stages of biological evolution.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٤٥)

for verily Allah has power over all things.

...لَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ مُّبَيِّنَاتٍ...

46. We have indeed sent down Signs that make things manifest:

...وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٤٦)

and Allah guides whom He wills to a way that is straight.

...وَيَقُولُونَ...

47. They say,

C3024. The Hypocrites, far from profiting from Allah's Light and Revelation, or declaring their open hostility,

play fast and loose according to their selfish worldly aims.

... آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا...

"We believe in Allah and in the Messenger, and we obey":

...ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ...

but even after that, some of them turn away:

...وَمَا أُولَٰئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٧)

they are not (really) Believers.

وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ (٤٨)

48. When they are summoned to Allah and His Messenger, in order that He may judge between them,
behold some of them decline (to come).

وَإِن يَكُن لَّهُمُ الْحَقُّ يَأْتُوا إِلَيْهِ مُذْعِنِينَ (٤٩)

49. But if the right is on their side, they come to him with all submission.

C3025. The Hypocrites only wanted to go to the judge who they thought was likely to give judgment in their favour.

If their case was incontestable, and justice was on their side, they readily came to the Prophet, knowing that he was just and would judge in their favour, even against his own adherents. But if they had done wrong, an impartial judge was not to their taste. They would rather go to some one who would tip the balance in their favour!

This form of selfishness and iniquity was not confined to the Hypocrites of Madinah. It is common in all ages, and should be suppressed.

أَفِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ ...

50. Is it that there is a disease in their hearts?

... أمِ ارْتَابُوا ...

Or do they doubt,

... أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَن يَحِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَرَسُولُهُ...

or are they in fear, that Allah and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them?

...بَلْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٥٠)

Nay,

it is they themselves who do wrong.

C3026. The real fact is that their conscience smites them. They know their own iniquity, and do not wish to go before a just judge who would be open to no influence and would be sure to give a righteous decree.

Section 7

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ...

51. The answer of the Believers, when summoned to Allah and His Messenger, in order that He may judge between them, is no other than this:

...أَن يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا...

they say, "We hear and we obey":

C3027. Cf. 2:285.

Contrast with it the attitude of the Unbelievers or Hypocrites, who say aloud, "we hear", but intend in their hearts to disobey (2:93).

...وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٥١)

it is such as these that will attain felicity.

C3028. True happiness, whether here or in the Hereafter, is not to be attained by fraud or duplicity: it is the privilege of those who listen attentively to good counsel and carry it out in their lives.

وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ...

52. It is such as obey Allah and His Messenger, and fear Allah and do right,

...فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ (٥٢)

that will win (in the end).

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ أَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ...

53. They swear their strongest oaths by Allah that, if only thou wouldst command them, they would leave (their homes).

C3029. Some people, especially hypocrites, give hyperbolic assurances, as did the Madinah Hypocrites to the holy Prophet, that they would do any bidding, even to the forsaking of their hearths and homes.

To this they are ready to swear their strongest oaths, which mean nothing. They are asked to spare their oaths, and quietly do at least such unheroic duties as they are asked to do in every-day life.

Idle words are not of the least value. Allah will judge by your actions, and He knows all, whether it is open or secret.

...قُل لَّا تُقْسِمُوا طَاعَةٌ مَّعْرُوفَةٌ...

Say:

"Swear ye not; obedience is (more) reasonable:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٥٣)

verily, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do."

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ...

54. Say:

Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger:

...فَإِن تَوَلَّوا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُم مَّا حُمِّلْتُمْ...

but if ye turn away, he is only responsible for the duty placed on him and ye for that placed on you.

...وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا...

If ye obey him, ye shall be on right guidance.

...وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (٥٤)

The Messenger's duty is only to preach the clear (Message)."

C3030. 'If you disobey Allah's commands as explained by His Prophet, you are not going to be forced.

The Prophet's mission is to train your will and explain clearly all the implications of your conduct. The responsibility for your conduct rests entirely on yourselves.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ...

55. Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds,

...لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُم فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them;

C3031. Three things are promised here, to those who have Faith and obey Allah's Law:

1. that they will inherit power and authority in the land, not for any selfish purposes of theirs nor by way of favouritism, but in order that they may maintain Allah's Law;
2. that the Religion of Right, which Allah has chosen for them, will be openly established, and will suppress all wrong and oppression;
3. that the righteous will live in peace and security, instead of having to suffer persecution,

   or leave their hearths and homes for the cause of Allah,

   or practise the rites of their Faith in secret.

...وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ ...

that He will establish in authority their religion -- the one which He has chosen for them;

... وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا...

and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace:

C3032. If this verse was revealed about the time of the Battle of the Ditch (*Khandaq*), also called the Battle of the Confederates (*Ahzab*), A.H. 4-5, we can imagine the comfort it gave to the Muslims who were besieged in Madinah by a force ten times their number.

The Muslims then lived in a state of great suspense and danger, and under arms for days on end. (See 23:9-20).

The security and authority they were promised came to them subsequently in abundant measures.

...يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا...

'They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me.'

...وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٥٥)

If any do reject faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٥٦)

56. So establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity:
and obey the Messenger; that ye may receive mercy.

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

57. Never think thou that the Unbelievers are going to frustrate (Allah's Plan) on earth:

...وَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٥٧)

their abode is the Fire -- and it is indeed an evil refuge!

C.160 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(24:58-64)

For a self-respecting life on earth, respect
For others' privacy is most essential

In the home and abroad; but superstitions
Are not met in intercourse amongst kin
Or true friends. In public council never
Fail to observe the most punctilious
Form and order: your self-respect
Demands that ye should give your Leader
Sincere respect and all obedience
Ye may not know but Allah doth know
the inwardness of things both great and small.

Section 8

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

58. O ye who believe!

C3033. We now come to rules of decorum within the family circle in refined society.

Servants and children have rather more freedom of access, as they come and go at all hours, and there is less ceremony with them. But even in their case there are limitations. During the night, before morning prayer, i.e., before dawn, they must discreetly ask for permission before they enter, partly because they must not unnecessarily disturb people asleep, and partly because the people are then undressed.

The same applies to the time for the midday siesta, and again to the time after night prayers, when people usually undress and turn in to sleep.

For grown-ups the rule is stricter: they must ask permission to come in at all times (24:59).

لِيَسْتَأْذِنكُمُ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ... ...

let those whom your right hands possess,

C3034. This would mean slaves in a regime of slavery.

But the principle applies to all personal servants who have to render personal service to their masters or mistresses by day and night.

...وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ...

and the (children) among you who have not come of age ask your permission (before they come to your presence), on three occasions,

C3035. 1 have translated **"come of age"** euphemistically for "attain the age of puberty".

...مِن قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُم مِّنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِن

بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاء...

- before morning prayer;
- the while ye doff your clothes for the noonday heat;
- and after the late-night prayer:

...ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَّكُمْ...

these are your three times of undress:

C3036. It is a mark of refinement for ladies and gentlemen not to be slipshod or vulgarly familiar, in dress, manners, or speech; and Islam aims at making every Muslim man or woman, however humble in station, a refined gentleman or lady, so that he or she can climb the ladder of spiritual development with humble confidence in Allah, and with the cooperation of his brothers and sisters in Islam.

The principles here laid down apply, if they are interpreted with due elasticity, even if social and domestic habits change, with changes in climate or in racial and personal habits.

Punctilious self-respect and respect for others, in small things as well as great, are the key-notes in these simple rules of etiquette.

...لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ بَعْدَهُنَّ...

outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them

...طَوَّافُونَ عَلَيْكُم بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

to move about attending to each other:

...كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ ...

thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you:

... وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٥٨)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنكُمُ الْحُلُمَ ...

59. But when the children among you come of age,

C3037. Children among you: i.e., in your house, not necessarily your own children.

All in the house, including the stranger within your gate, must conform to these wholesome rules.

... فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

let them (also) ask for permission, as do those senior to them (in age):

C3038. Those before them, i.e., those who have already been mentioned in the previous verse.

It is suggested that each generation as it grows up should follow the wholesome traditions of its predecessors. While they were children, they behaved like children: when they grow up, they must behave like grown-ups.

...كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ...

thus does Allah make clear His Signs to you:

...وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٥٩)

for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

C3039. The refrain connects up this verse with the last verse, whose meaning is completed here.

The slight variation ("His Signs" here, against "the Signs" there) shows that this verse is more personal, as

referring to children who have now become responsible men and women.

وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ اللَّاتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ نِكَاحًا...

60. Such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage --

C3040. For elderly women in the home the rules of dress and decorum are not so exacting as for younger women, but they are also enjoined to study modesty, both because it is good in itself, and as an example to the younger people.

...فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَن يَضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ...

there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty:

...وَأَن يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ...

but it is best for them to be modest:

...وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٦٠)

and Allah is One Who sees and knows all things.

C3041. Another example of a refrain: see n. 3039 above.

Verses 58 and 59 were closer connected: their refrain was practically identical.

This verse, though ancillary, is less closely connected: its refrain comes in like a half-note in a melody.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ...

61. it is no fault in the blind nor in one born lame,

...وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ أَن تَأْكُلُوا مِن بُيُوتِكُمْ...

nor in one afflicted with illness, nor in yourselves, that ye should eat

- in your own houses,

C3042. There were various Arab superstitions and fancies which are combated and rejected here.

1. The blind, or the halt, or those afflicted with serious disease were supposed to be objects of divine displeasure, and as such not fit to be associated with us in meals in our houses: we are not to entertain such a thought, as we are not judges of the causes of people's misfortunes, which deserve OUT sympathy and kindness.
2. It was considered unbecoming to take meals in the houses of near relatives: this taboo is not approved.
3. A similar superstition about houses in our possession but not in our actual occupation is disapproved.
4. If people think they should not fall under obligation to casual friends, that does not apply to a sincere friend, in whose company a meal is not to be rejected, but welcomed.
5. If people make a superstition either that they should always eat separately, or that they must always eat in company, as some people weary of their own company think, either of them is wrong.

Man is free and should regulate his life according to needs and circumstances. (R).

...أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ...

- or those of your fathers, or your mothers,
- or your brothers, or your sisters,

...أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخْوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ...

- or your father's brothers, or your father's sisters,
- or your mother's brothers, or your mother's sisters,

...أَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُم مَّفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ...

- or in houses of which the keys are in your possession,
- or in the house of a sincere friend of yours:

...لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَن تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا...

there is no blame on you, whether ye eat in company or separately.

...فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُم بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ مُبَارَكَةً

طَيِّبَةً...

But if ye enter houses, salute each other -- a greeting or blessing and purity as from Allah.

C3043. The shades of meaning in Salam are explained in n. 2512 to 19:62.

Here, we were first told that we might accept hospitality and good fellowship in

Here, we were first told that we might accept hospitality and good fellowship in each other's houses.

Now we are told what spirit should animate us in doing so. It should not be a spirit only of self-satisfaction in a worldly sense. It should rather be a spirit of good-will in the highest spiritual sense of the term-purity of motives and purity of life, as in the sight of Allah.

...كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُون (٦١)

Thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you: that ye may understand.

C3044. See notes 3039 and 3041 above. The refrain comes again, in a different form, closing the argument from a different point of view.

Section 9

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ...

62. Only those are Believers who believe in Allah and His Messenger:

...وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّى يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ...

when they are with him on a matter requiring collective action, they do not depart until they have asked for his leave:

C3045. Matter requiring collective action: anything that affects the Community as a whole: Jumuah and 'Id prayers are periodical occasions of this kind, but what is meant here is, I think, joint consultations with a view to joint undertakings, such as a Jihad, or some kind of organisation in peace.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ...

those who ask for thy leave are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger;

...فَإِذَا اسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأْذَن لِّمَن شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ ...

so when they ask for thy leave, for some business of theirs, give leave to those of them whom thou wilt,

C3046. That is, those to whom, in the exercise of your impartial discretion, you think it expedient to give leave.

"Will", unless the context shows otherwise, means "right will", not a will without any definite principle behind it.

... وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ اللَّهَ...

and ask Allah for their forgiveness:

C3047. In important matters of general consultation, even though leave of absence is given on sufficient excuse, it implies some defect in duty on the part of the person to whom the leave is given, and therefore the need of forgiveness from Him to Whom we owe duty in a perfect measure.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٦٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُم بَعْضًا...

63. Deem not the summons of the Messenger among yourselves like the summons of one of you to another:

C3048. Three significations are possible.

- One is that adopted in the Translation, which agrees with the view of most Commentators.

- Another would be:

  'Do not think that the prayer of the Prophet of Allah is like your ordinary requests to another: the Prophet's prayer will be about serious matters and will be accepted by Allah'.

- A third interpretation would be:

  'Do not address the Prophet familiarly as you would address one another: use proper terms of respect for him.'

...قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ يَتَسَلَّلُونَ مِنكُمْ لِوَاذًا...

Allah doth know those of you who slip away under shelter of some excuse:

...فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ...

then let those beware who withstand the Messenger's order lest some trial befall them,

C3049. The **"trial"** is understood to be some misfortune in this life, and the "grievous Penalty" to be the punishment in the Hereafter.

... أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٦٣)

or a grievous Penalty be inflicted on them.

...أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

64. Be quite sure that to Allah doth belong whatever is in the heavens and on earth.

...قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ ...

Well doth He know what ye are intent upon:

C3050. The condition or position you are in, the motives which actuate you, and the ends you have in view.

... وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا...

and one day they will be brought back to Him, and He will tell them the truth of what they did:

C3051. Things misunderstood or maligned, falsely praised or held in honour, or fraudulently shown to be good when they are evil-everything will be revealed in its true light on the Day of final Judgment.

...وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٦٤)

for Allah doth know all things.



The Absolute Reality

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهِ

And put thy trust in Him Who lives and dies not; and celebrate His praise;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Furqan

الْفُرْقَانَ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah further develops the contrast between Light and Darkness, as symbolical of knowledge and ignorance, righteousness and sin, spiritual progress and degradation. It closes with a definition of the deeds by which the righteous are known in the environment of this world.

It is mainly an early Makkan Surah, but its date has no significance.

Summery- Allah's highest gift to man is that He has furnished a Criterion for Judgement between right and wrong-in His revelation, which teaches us the true significance of our eternal Future (25:1-20, and C. 161).

Those who do not use that Criterion will be full of woe when the Judgement comes, for Allah gave full warning at all times (25:21-44, and C. 162).

In the contrasts of shade and sun, night and day, death and life, and the whole ordering of Allah's Creation, men may learn of Allah Most Gracious; and the virtues of the righteous respond to Allah's care them (25:45-77, and C. 163).

C.161 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(25:1-20)

Among the highest and greatest of the gifts of Allah
Is His Revelation, which is the Criterion
By which we may judge between right
And wrong-between false and true worship,
Between the Message that comes from Allah
And the forgeries of men, between the Real
In our eternal Future and the Fancies
By which we are misled. The Prophets of Allah
Come as men to live among men and guide them.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي ...

1. Blessed is He

C3052. Tabaraka: the root meaning is "increase" or "abundance".

Here that aspect of Allah's dealing with His creatures is emphasised, which shows His abundant goodness to all His creatures, in that He sent the Revelation of His Will, not only in the unlimited Book of Nature, but in a definite Book in human language, which gives clear directions and admonitions to all.

The English word **"blessed"** hardly conveys that meaning, but I can find no other without departing far from established usage. To emphasise the meaning I have explained, I have translated "Blessed is ..... but "Blessed be..." is also admissible, as it brings out another shade of meaning, that we praise and bless His holy name.

... نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ ...

Who sent down the Criterion to His servant,

C3053. That by which we can judge clearly between right and wrong.

Here the reference is to the Quran, which has already been symbolised by light. This symbol is continued here, and many contrasts are shown, in the midst of which we can distinguish between the true and the false by Allah's Light, especially the contrast between righteousness and sin.

... لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا (١)

that it may be an admonition to all creatures --

C3054. The pronoun in **yakuna** may refer either to **Furqan** (the Criterion) or to **'Abd** (the holy Prophet).

In either case the ultimate meaning is the same. The Quran is the standing Criterion for judgment between right and wrong.

...الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

2. He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth:

... وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ ...

no son has He begotten, nor has He a partner in His dominion:

... وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا (٢)

it is He Who created all things, and ordered them in due proportions.

C3055. The majesty of Allah and His independence of all wants or help are mentioned to show how exceedingly great is His goodness in revealing His Will to us.

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَّا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ...

3. Yet have they taken, besides Him, gods that can create nothing but are themselves created;

C3056. This is the first great distinction taught by the Criterion; to know the attributes of the true God, as against the false fancies of men. (R).

... وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنفُسِهِمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا...

that have no control of hurt or good to themselves;

... وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ مَوْتًا وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا نُشُورًا (٣)

nor can they control Death nor Life nor Resurrection.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ افْتَرَاهُ وَأَعَانَهُ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ آخَرُونَ...

4. But the Misbelievers say:

"Naught is this but a lie which he has forged, and others have helped him at it."

C3057. Ifk, which I have translated a "lie" may be distinguished from **zur** at the end of this verse, translated "falsehood".

The "lie" which the enemies attributed to the holy Prophet of Allah was supposed to be something which did not exist in reality, but was invented by him with the aid of other people: the implication was that:

- the Revelation was not a revelation but a forgery,
- and that the things revealed e.g. the news of the Hereafter, the Resurrection, the Judgment, the Bliss

of the Righteous and the sufferings of the Evil, were fanciful and had no basis in fact.

Delusion is also suggested.

The reply is that, so far from that being the case, the facts were true and the charges were false **(zar)**,-the falsehood being due to the habits of iniquity for which the Misbelievers' whole mental and spiritual attitude was responsible. (R).

... فَقَدْ جَاؤُوا ظُلْمًا وَزُورًا (٤)

In truth it is they who have put forward an iniquity and a falsehood.

وَقَالُوا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ اكْتَتَبَهَا فَهِيَ تُمْلَى عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٥)

5. And they say:

"Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written: and they are dictated before him morning and evening."

C3058. In their misguided arrogance they say: 'We have heard such things before; they are pretty tales which have come down from ancient times; they are good for amusement, but who takes them seriously?'

When the beauty and power of the Revelation are pointed out, and its miracle as coming from an unlearned man, they again hint at other men who wrote them, though they could not produce any one who could write anything like it.

قُلْ أَنزَلَهُ الَّذِي يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

6. Say:

"This (Qur'án) was sent down by Him Who knows the Mystery (that is) in the heavens and the earth:

C3059. The answer is that the Quran teaches spiritual knowledge of what is ordinarily hidden from men's sight, and such knowledge can only come from Allah, to Whom alone is known the secret of the whole Creation.

In spite of man's sin and shortcomings, He forgives, and He sends His most precious gift, i.e., the revelation of His Will.

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٦)

verily He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

وَقَالُوا مَالِ هَٰذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ...

7. And they say:

"What sort of a messenger is this, who eats food, and walks through the streets?

... لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونَ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا (٧)

Why has not an angel been sent down to him to give admonition with him?

C3060. This is another objection:

'He is only a man like us: why is not an angel sent down, if not by himself, at least with him?'

The answer is:

angels would be of no use to men as Messengers, as they and men would not understand each other, and if angels came, it might cause more confusion and wonder than understanding in men's minds.

Cf. 21:7-8; 6:8-9.

The office of an angel is different. A teacher for mankind is one who shares their nature, mingles in their life, is acquainted with their doings, and sympathises with their joys and sorrows.

... أَوْ يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْهِ كَنزٌ

8. "Or (why) has not a treasure been bestowed on him,

... أَوْ تَكُونُ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ يَأْكُلُ مِنْهَا...

or why has he (not) a garden for enjoyment?"

C3061. Literally, 'that he may eat out of it'.

As shown in n. 776 to 5:66, **akala** (to eat) has a comprehensive meaning, implying enjoyment of all kinds.

Here the garden itself stands for a type of the amenities of life: its fruits would be available for eating, its coolness for rest and refreshment, its waters and its landscape for aesthetic delight.

... وَقَالَ الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا (٨)

The wicked say: "Ye follow none other than a man bewitched."

C3062. Cf. 17:47.

This speech, of the wicked or the ungodly, is meant to be even more bitter than that of the Misbelievers. It makes out the Prophet to be a demented fool!

... انظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ

9. See what kinds of companions they make for thee!

... فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا (٩)

But they have gone astray, and never a way will they be able to find!

C3063. The charges the enemies made against the Messenger of Allah recoiled on those who made them. The Messenger was vindicated, and went from strength to strength, for Allah's Truth will always prevail.

The men who perversely leave the way of truth, righteousness, and sincerity, have not only missed the Way, but on account of their perversity they will never be able to find any way by which they can get back to Truth.

...تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي إِن شَاءَ جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا مِّن ذَٰلِكَ جَنَّاتٍ

10. Blessed is He Who, if that were His will, could give thee better (things) than those -- Gardens

C3064. Cf. above, 25:1.

The reminiscent phrase shows that the first argument, about the Revelation and Prophethood, is completed, and we now pass on to the contrast, the fate of the rejecters of both.

... تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَيَجْعَل لَّكَ قُصُورًا (١٠)

beneath which rivers flow; and He could give thee Palaces (secure to dwell in).

C3065. This phrase is usually symbolized of the Bliss in the Hereafter. If it were Allah's Plan, He could give his Messengers complete felicity and power in this life also. Instead of being persecuted, mocked, driven out of their homes, and having to exert their utmost powers of body, mind, and character to plant the flag of Truth in an unbelieving world, they could have lived in ease and security. But that would not have given the real lessons they came to teach struggling humanity by their example.

Section 2

...بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِالسَّاعَةِ

11. Nay, they deny the Hour (of the Judgment to come):

C3066. Denying the Hour of Judgment means denying the power of Justice and Truth to triumph; it means asserting the dominion of Evil. But Allah himself will punish them, as shown in the following verses.

... وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِمَن كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيرًا (١١)

but We have prepared a Blazing Fire for such as deny the Hour:

إِذَا رَأَتْهُم مِّن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ سَمِعُوا لَهَا تَغَيُّظًا وَزَفِيرًا (١٢)

12. When it sees them from a place far off, they will hear its fury and its raging sigh.

C3067. For **zafir**, a deep emission of breath or a sigh, see n. 1607 to 11:106.

Here the Fire is personified. It is raging with hunger and fury, and as soon as it sees them from ever so far, it emits a sigh of desire. Till then they had not realised their full danger.

Now, just as their heart begins to tremble with terror, they are bound together-like with like,-and cast into the roaring flames!

وَإِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُقَرَّنِينَ دَعَوْا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُورًا (١٣)

13. And when they are cast, bound together, into a constricted place therein, they will plead for destruction there and then!

C3068. Anything-total annihilation-would be better than the anguish they will suffer. But no annihilation will be granted to them.

One destruction will not be enough to wipe out the intensity of their anguish. They will have to ask for many destructions, but they will not get them!

لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُورًا وَاحِدًا وَادْعُوا ثُبُورًا كَثِيرًا (١٤)

14. "This day plead not for a single destruction: plead for destruction oft-repeated!"

قُلْ أَذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ...

15. Say:

"Is that best, or the eternal Garden, promised to the righteous?

C3069. Shifting the scene back to this life, they may fairly be asked:

"Here is the result of the two courses of conduct: which do you prefer?"

... كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاءً وَمَصِيرًا (١٥)

For them, that is a reward as well as a goal (of attainment).

C3070. To the righteous, the final Bliss will in one sense be a reward. But the word **"reward"** does not truly represent facts, for two reasons:

- the Bliss will be greater than they deserved; and
- righteousness is its own reward.

The best way of expressing the result would be to say that;

- their highest Wish will now have been attained;
- the goal will have been reached;
- they will be in Allah's Presence.

That is salvation in the highest.

لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاؤُونَ خَالِدِينَ...

16. "For them there will be therein all that they wish for:
they will dwell (there) for aye:

... كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَسْؤُولًا (١٦)

a promise to be prayed for from thy Lord."

C3071. That is the sort of thing

- to be prayed for from Allah which he has made binding upon Himself and not ephemeral things, even though they may be good.

And that is the sort of thing that Allah has promised and undertaken to give.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

17. The Day He will gather them together as well as those whom they worship besides Allah,

... فَيَقُولُ ...

He will ask:

C3072. The question is as in a Court of Justice, to convince those who stand arraigned.

... أَأَنتُمْ أَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ (١٧)

"Was it ye who led these my servants astray,
or did they stray from the Path themselves?"

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنبَغِي لَنَا أَن نَّتَّخِذَ مِن دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاء...

18. They will say:

"Glory to Thee! not meet was it for us that we should take for protectors others besides Thee:

C3073. The creatures of Allah who were worshipped will prove that they never asked for worship: on the contrary they themselves worshipped Allah and sought the protection of Allah and of none but Allah. Cf. 46:5-6.

They will go further and show that the false worshippers added ingratitude to their other sins: for Allah bestowed abundance on them, and they blasphemed against Allah. They were indeed "worthless and destroyed", for the word bar bears both significations.

... وَلَكِن مَّتَّعْتَهُمْ وَآبَاءهُمْ حَتَّى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ...

but Thou didst bestow, on them and their fathers, good things (in life), until they forgot the Message:

... وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا بُورًا (١٨)

for they were a people (worthless and) lost.

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوكُم بِمَا تَقُولُونَ فَمَا تَسْتَطِيعُونَ صَرْفًا وَلَا نَصْرًا...

19. (Allah will say):

"Now have they proved you liars in what ye say: so ye cannot avert (your penalty) nor (get) help."

C3074. The argument is as in a court of justice. If the false worshippers plead that they were misled by those whom they falsely worshipped, the latter will be confronted with them and will prove that plea to be false. No help can be got from them, and the penalty cannot then be averted. After all these things are thus explained in detail beforehand, all ungodly men should repent and turn to Allah.

False worship is here identified with sin, for sin is disobedience to Allah, and arises from a wrong appreciation of Allah's attributes and His goodness to His creatures. The sinful man refuses, in his conduct, to serve Allah: he serves other things than Allah. (R).

... وَمَن يَظْلِم مِّنكُمْ نُذِقْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيرًا (١٩)

And whoever among you does wrong, him shall We cause to taste of a grievous Penalty.

وَما أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا إِنَّهُمْ لَيَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ...

20. And the messengers whom We sent before thee were all (men) who ate food

... وَيَمْشُونَ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ...

and walked through the streets:

C3075. Cf. above, 25:7.

... وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً ...

We have made some of you as a trial for others:

C3076. In Allah's universal Plan, each unit or thing serves a purpose.

If some are rich, the poor should not envy them: it may be that the rich man's proximity is itself a trial of their virtue.

If some are poor, the righteous rich should not despise or neglect them: it may be that their coming within their sight is a trial for the real feeling of charity or brotherly love in the rich.

If A is bad-tempered or persecutes or ill-uses B, it may be an opportunity for B to show his patience or humility or his faith in the ultimate prevalence of justice and truth.

Whatever our experiences with other human beings may be, we must make them subserve the ends of our spiritual improvement and perhaps theirs too.

... أَتَصْبِرُونَ...

will ye have patience?

... وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا (٢٠)

For Allah is One Who sees (all things).

C.162 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(25:21-44)

Woe to the misbelievers who arrogantly
Demand to see Allah, yet reject
His Signs! The Judgement will come
And then they see, too late, how evil
Casts nothing but treacherous snares for man.
Slowly comes Allah's Revelation, in ways
Most conducive to man's enlightenment
Men in their folly reject the most obvious
Signs of Allah. Let them mock! Soon
Will they know! Alas! men ruled by self-impulse
Are worse than brute beasts to guide or control!

Section 3

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءنَا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ ...

21. Such as fear not the meeting with Us (for Judgment) say:
"Why are not the angels sent down to us,

C3077. The blasphemers who have given up all Faith and laugh at the Hereafter: nothing is sacred to them: their arrogance and insolence are beyond all bounds.

... أَوْ نَرَى رَبَّنَا...

or (why) do we not see our Lord?"

C3078. Cf. 2:55.

The Israelites in the time of Moses demanded to see Allah. But they were struck with thunder and lightning even as they looked on. Indeed death would have been their fate, had it not been for the mercy of Allah.

... لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ ...

Indeed they have an arrogant conceit of themselves,

... وَعَتَوْ عُتُوًّا كَبِيرًا (٢١)

and mighty is the insolence of their impiety!

يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَا بُشْرَى يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ...

22. The Day they see the angels -- no joy will there be to the sinners that Day:

... وَيَقُولُونَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا (٢٢)

the (angels) will say:

"There is a barrier forbidden (to you) altogether!"

C3079. They will not be allowed to enjoy any of the felicity or peace which will be the normal state of the new world of Reality. Their own past will stand as a barrier to shut them off .

وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَى مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَّنثُورًا (٢٣)

23. And We shall turn to whatever deeds they did (in this life),

and We shall make such deeds as floating dust scattered about.

C3080. The false hopes they built on in this life, and the deeds did under the shadow of such false hopes will be dissipated as if they were dust flying about in the wind. They will have no value whatever.

أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا وَأَحْسَنُ مَقِيلًا (٢٤)

24. The Companions of the Garden will be well, that Day, in their abode, and have the fairest of places for repose.

C3081. The barrier which will shut out the evil ones will not exist for the righteous, who will have an abode of bliss and repose, for they will be in the Garden of Allah's Good Pleasure.

وَيَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ السَّمَاءُ بِالْغَمَامِ وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ تَنزِيلًا (٢٥)

25. The Day the heaven shall be rent asunder with clouds, and angels shall be sent down, descending (in ranks) --

C3082. It will be a new world, and the way to describe it must necessarily draw upon our present experience of the finest things in nature.

The sky, which now appears remote and unpeopled will be rent asunder. There will appear clouds of glory - angels and spiritual Lights of all grades and ranks- and the true majesty and goodness of Allah will be visible as it should be in reality, and as it is not now, on account of "our muddy vesture of decay". (R).

الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ لِلرَّحْمَنِ...

26. That Day, the dominion as of right and truth, shall be (wholly) for (Allah) Most Merciful:

C3083. See last note.

... وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا (٢٦)

it will be a day of dire difficulty for the Misbelievers.

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ...

27. The Day that the wrongdoer will bite at his hands, He will say,

... يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا (٢٧)

"Oh! would that I had taken a (straight) path with the Messenger!

C3084. The words are general, and for us the interest is in a general sense.

A man who actually receives the Truth and is on the right path is all the more culpable if he is diverted from that path by the machinations of a worldly friend.

The particular person whom some Commentators mention in this connection was one 'Uqba who received the light of Islam, but was misled afterwards by a worldly friend into apostasy and blasphemy. He came to an evil end afterwards.

يَا وَيْلَتَى لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا (٢٨)

28. "Ah! woe is me! would that I had never taken such a one for a friend!

لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي...

29. "He did lead me astray from the Message (of Allah) after it had come to me!

... وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنسَانِ خَذُولًا (٢٩)

Ah! the Evil One is but a traitor to man!

C3085. The seductive wiles of the Satan are merely meant for snares. There is fraud and treachery in them. The deceived ones are left in the lurch after the way of escape is made impossible for them.

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا (٣٠)

30. Then the Messenger will say:

"O my Lord! truly my people took this Qur'án for just foolish nonsense."

C3086. "My people" are of course the unbelieving Quraish. They treated the Quran with neglect, i.e., something to be discarded. But they were only a handful of people whose vested interests were touched by the beneficent reforms initiated by Islam.

They soon passed away, and all Arabic-speaking or Arabic-understanding people have considered the Quran as a treasury of Truths expressed in the most beautiful possible language, with a meaning that grows deeper with research. (R).

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ...

31. Thus have We made for every prophet an enemy among the sinners:

... وَكَفَى بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَنَصِيرًا (٣١)

but enough is thy Lord to guide and to help.

C3087. It is the nature of sin to be hostile to truth and righteousness, but such hostility will not harm the righteous and need cause no misgiving because Allah will guide and help those who work in His cause.

And what could he better or more effective than His guidance and help?

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً...

32. Those who reject Faith say: "Why is not the Qur'án revealed to him all at once?"

... كَذَٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا (٣٢)

Thus (is it revealed), that We may strengthen thy heart thereby,

and We have rehearsed it to thee in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually.

C3088. Three reasons are given for the gradual revelation of the Quran.

- **"To strengthen thy heart":** the tremendous task of winning the Arab nation, and, through them, the whole world, to Islam, required superhuman patience, constancy, and firmness, and these qualities were strengthened by the gradual promulgation of solutions to each difficulty as it arose.

- **"Slow, well-arranged stages":** though the stages were gradual, as the occasion demanded from time to time, in the course of twenty-three years, the whole emerged, when completed, as a well-arranged scheme of spiritual instruction, as we have seen in following the arrangement of the Suras.

- Questions put and answers given: see next note.

وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا (٣٣)

33. And no question do they bring to thee but We reveal to thee the truth and the best explanation (thereof).

C3089. Divine knowledge is a fathomless ocean. But glimpses of it can be obtained by any individuals sincerely searching for the Truth. Their progress will be in grades. If they ask questions, and answers are then furnished to them, they are more likely to apprehend the

Truth, as they have already explored the part of the territory in which they are interested.

In the same way, when concrete questions arise by the logic of events, and they are answered not only for the occasion, but from a general stand-point, the teaching has a far greater chance of penetrating the human intelligence and taking shape in practical conduct. And this is the usual way of instruction in the Quran.

الَّذِينَ يُحْشَرُونَ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ...

34. Those who will be gathered to Hell (prone) on their faces --

C3090. That is, in ignominy.

... أُولَٰئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا (٣٤)

they will be in an evil plight, and, as to Path, most astray.

C3091. This verse may be compared and contrasted with 25:24 above.

Here the argument is rounded off about the distinction between the Good and Evil in their final Destiny. The Good are to have "the fairest of places for repose", and in contrast, the Evil are, "as to Path, most astray". They have no repose, and their wanderings lead nowhere.

Section 4

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهُ أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ وَزِيرًا (٣٥)

35. Before this, We sent Moses the Book, and appointed his brother Aaron with him as Minister;

C3092. Cf. 20:29, and the whole passage there, which is merely referred to here, to show how previous Prophets were treated, but how they stuck fast to the Criterion given, to distinguish between Good and Evil.

فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَا إِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا...

36. And We commanded: "Go ye both, to the people who have rejected Our Signs":

... فَدَمَّرْنَاهُمْ تَدْمِيرًا (٣٦)

and those (people) We destroyed with utter destruction.

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ لَمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ أَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً...

37. And the people of Noah -- when they rejected the messengers, We drowned them, and We made them as a Sign for mankind;

C3093. The stories of Noah, of the prophets of 'Ad and Thamud (and of other prophets), in the reactions of their communities to their teaching are told in 26:105-159.

Here they are just mentioned to illustrate how little respect past ages had for their prophets and teachers of Truth. But Allah's Truth did not suffer: it was the blind rejecters of spiritual Truth who were wiped out.

... وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٣٧)

and We have prepared for (all) wrongdoers a grievous Penalty --

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودَ وَأَصْحَابَ الرَّسِّ وَقُرُونًا بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ كَثِيرًا (٣٨)

38. As also 'Ad and Thamud, and the Companions of the Rass, and many a generation between them.

C3094. Commentators are not clear as to who the **"Companions of the Rass"** were. The root meaning of **"rass"** is an old well or shallow water-pit. Another root connects it with the burial of the dead. But it is probably the name of a town or place.

The **"Companions of the Rass"** may well have been the people of Shu'aib, as they are here mentioned with the 'Ad, the Thamud, and Lut's people, and the people of Shu'aib are mentioned in a similar connection in 26:176-190 and in 11:84-95.

Shu'aib was the prophet of the Madyan people in the north-west of Arabia, where many old wells are found. There is however an oasis town al-Rass in the district of Qasim in Middle Najd, about thirty-five miles south-west of the town of 'Unaiza, reputed to be the central point of the Arabian Peninsula, and situated midway between Makkah and Basra.

See Doughly's Arabia Deserts, thin-paper one-volume edition, London 1926, 11, 435 and Map, Lat. 26*N., and Long. 43*E.

وَكُلًّا ضَرَبْنَا لَهُ الْأَمْثَالَ...

39. To each one We set forth parables and examples;

... وَكُلًّا تَبَّرْنَا تَتْبِيرًا (٣٩)

and each one We broke to utter annihilation (for their sins).

وَلَقَدْ أَتَوْا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي أُمْطِرَتْ مَطَرَ السَّوْءِ...

40. And the (Unbelievers) must indeed have passed by the town on which was rained a shower of evil:

C3095. This refers to Lut's story and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the wicked cities of the plain near the Dead Sea, by a shower of brimstone. The site lies on the highway between Arabia and Syria.

Cf. 15:74, 76, and n. 1998.

... أَفَلَمْ يَكُونُوا يَرَوْنَهَا...

did they not then see it (with their own eyes)?

... بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ نُشُورًا (٤٠)

But they fear not the Resurrection.

وَإِذَا رَأَوْكَ إِن يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا...

41. When they see thee, they treat thee no otherwise than in mockery:

... أَهَذَا الَّذِي بَعَثَ اللَّهُ رَسُولًا (٤١)

"Is this the one whom Allah has sent as a messenger?"

إِن كَادَ لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ آلِهَتِنَا لَوْلَا أَن صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا...

42. "He indeed would well-nigh have misled us from our gods, had it not been that we were constant to them!"

... وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ حِينَ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ مَنْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا (٤٢)

Soon will they know, when they see the Penalty, who it is that is most misled in Path!

C3096. "Path" (Sabil) is almost equivalent here to conduct, way of life.

... أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ

43. Seest thou such a one as taketh for his god his own passion (or impulse)?

... أَفَأَنتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا (٤٣)

Couldst thou be a disposer of affairs for him?

C3097. The man who worships his **own passions** or impulses or desires is the most hopeless to teach or lead or guide.

If it were anything else the matter with him, the Prophet could argue with him. But Reason cannot prevail over blind passion. It is vain to hope that such a man could be led, until his mad desires are killed. No one could undertake any responsibility for him, for he obeys no law and follows no advice. He is worse than brute beasts, which may not understand, but at least follow the wholesome instincts implanted in them by Allah. The lawless man has killed his instincts and is unwilling to submit to guidance.

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ...

44. Or thinkest thou that most of them listen or understand?

... إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ ...

They are only like cattle; --

... بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا (٤٤)

nay, they are worse astray in Path.

C.163 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(25:45-77)

But the Signs of Allah are everywhere
In creation. The Sun and the Shadow,
The Day and the Night, the Wind and the Rain-
All things in nature are symbols, and point
Too the Law Divine, and the destiny, good
Or ill, of man. Will he not learn
And put his trust in Him, the Merciful?
His true servants ever adore him
In humility and fear of wrong, in faith
And just moderation in life, in respect
For duties owed to Allah and men
And self, in avoidance of all that is false
Or futile, in strict and grateful attention
To Allah's Message, and their families
In the van of those who love and honour Allah.

Section 5

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ ...

45. Hast thou not turned thy vision to thy Lord? --

C3098. We saw in 24:35 that Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.

We have now another sublime passage, in which we are asked to contemplate the Glory of Allah by a parable of the subtle play of Light and Shade in Allah's creation. (R).

... كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ...

how He doth prolong the Shadow!

C3099. In our artificial fife and surroundings we fail to see some of the finest mysteries of Light and Shade.

We praise, and rightly, the wonderful colours of sunset. We see, particularly in climates more northerly than that of India, the subtle play of Light and Shade in the twilight succeeding sunsets.

If we were as assiduous in seeing sunrises and the play of Light and Shade preceding them, we should see phenomena even more impressive, as the early morning seems to us more holy than any other time in the twenty-four hours of the sun's daily journey.

- There is first the false dawn, with its curious uncertain light and the curious long uncertain shadows which it casts.
- Then there are the streaks of black in the East, succeeded by the true dawn, with its delicate tones of colours and light and shade.

The fight of this true or false Dawn is not given by the direct rays of the sun. In a sense it is not light, but the shadows or reflections of light. And they gradually merge into actual sunrise, with its more substantial or more defined shadows, which we can definitely connect with the sun.

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَجَعَلَهُ سَاكِنًا...

If He willed, He could make it stationary!

... ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسَ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيلًا (٤٥)

Then do We make the sun its guide:

C3100. The morning shadows are long but more definite, and their length and direction are seen to be guided by the sun. But they change insensibly every second or fraction of a second.

... ثُمَّ قَبَضْنَاهُ إِلَيْنَا

46. Then We draw it in towards Ourselves --

C3101. As the sun rises higher and higher, the shadows contract. In regions where the sun gets actually to the zenith at noon, there is no shadow left at that time.

Where does it go to?

It was but a shadow cast by a substance and it gets absorbed by the substance which produced it. (R).

... قَبْضًا يَسِيرًا (٤٦)

a contraction by easy stages.

C3102. Let us now reverently turn our vision (as far as we are able) to the symbolic meaning.

Allah is the Light. All things in creation – whether concrete or abstract – are but shadows, depending on His Light. All shadows are not equal. He gives length or size of substance to such as He pleases. And some shadows almost become reflected lights, like the light of the false or the true Dawn. Such are holy men, in all kinds of gradations.

The shadows are constantly in a state of flux; so are all things in Creation, all things we see or covet in this life. Allah, if He wills, can give some of them greater fixity or comparative stability. (R).

...وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا

47. And He it is Who makes the Night as a Robe for you; and Sleep as Repose,

... وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا (٤٧)

and makes the Day (as it were) a Resurrection.

C3103. It is still the contrast between Light and Shade;

- but the shade of Night is as a Robe to cover and screen us and give us Repose from activity;

  and the Light of Day is for striving, work, activity.

- Or again, the Night is like Death, our temporary Death before Judgment, the time during which our senses are as sealed in Sleep;

  and the Day is like the renewal of Life at the Resurrection.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيَاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ...

48. And He it is Who sends the Winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy,

C3104. Cf. 7:57.

The Winds are heralds of Joy, ushering in Rain, which is one form of Allah's Mercy.

Again, the symbolism presents a fresh point of view. Heat (which is connected with light) sets up currents in the atmosphere, besides sucking up moisture from the seas, and distributing it by means of Winds over wide surfaces of the earth.

In the physical world we know the beneficent action of heat on life, and by contrast, we also know how intolerable high temperatures may become, and how the cloud-bearing Winds come as welcome heralds of rain. (R).

... وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا (٤٨)

and We send down purifying water from the sky --

C3105. Rain water (in pure air) is not only pure water distilled in air and sky, but it is the best purifying and sanitating agent on the largest scale known to US.

لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا...

49. That with it We may give life to a dead land,

... وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا وَأَنَاسِيَّ كَثِيرًا (٤٩)

and slake the thirst of things We have created, cattle and men in great numbers.

C3106. The whole cycle of water, -sea, clouds, rain or hail or snow, rivers, and sea again,- is a remarkable

illustration of the processes of nature making Allah's providence visible to us.

The salts of the sea sanitate and purify all the filth that pours into it. Water action, in the form of rain, frost, glaciers, rivers, lakes, etc., is responsible for the building up and configuration of the crust of the earth, and is the chief agent in physical geography. A parched desert quickly comes to life under the action of water.

All drinking water, whether derived from rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, springs, wells, or water-works of any kind, are ultimately traceable to rain.

The connection of life with water is intimate. The physical basis of life itself, protoplasm, is in great part water; see 25:54 below.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَاهُ بَيْنَهُمْ لِيَذَّكَّرُوا...

50. And We have distributed the (water) amongst them, in order that they may celebrate (Our) praises,

C3107. The water is distributed all over the world, in order that all life may receive its support according to its needs. In 25:48-50, we have the argument of contrasts stated in another way.

Water is life, and is made available to sustain life all over the world; this is a physical fact which all can see. But water is also the symbol of spiritual life, whose sustaining principle is the Will of Allah as made known to us through Revelation. It sometimes comes to us in our inward or spiritual storms.

Many violent unsettlements of the spirit are but heralds of the refreshing showers of spiritual understanding that come in their wake. They purify our souls, and produce spiritual Life even where there was a parched spiritual desert before. They continue to sustain us in our normal spiritual Life out of the reservoirs of Allah's Revelation, which are open to all, and well distributed in time and space.

The universality of distribution is again referred to in the following verse.

... فَأَبَى أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا (٥٠)

but most men are averse (to aught) but (rank) ingratitude.

C3108. In contrast to Allah's abounding Mercy is man's base ingratitude; another symbolic contrast between Light and Darkness, or Water and Drought.

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَذِيرًا (٥١)

51. Had it been Our Will, We could have sent a warner to every center of population,

C3109. Allah's Message has been distributed to all nations. If it had been necessary, a Prophet could have been sent to every town and village.

But Allah's Plan is different. He has sent His Light to every heart, through Ms Signs in man's conscience, in Nature, and in Revelation.

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُم بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا (٥٢)

52. Therefore listen not to the Unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost strenuousness, with the (Qur'án).

C3110. The distribution of Allah's Signs being universal, the Prophet of Allah pays no heed to carping critics who reject Faith. He wages the biggest Jihad of all, with the weapon of Allah's Revelation,

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ...

53. It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water:

C3111. Maraja: literally, let free or let loose cattle for grazing.

Bahrain: two seas, or two bodies of flowing water; for *bahr* is applied both to the salt sea and to rivers. In the world taken as a whole, there are two bodies of water, viz.:

- the great salt Ocean, and

- the bodies of sweet water fed by rain, whether they are rivers, lakes or underground springs:

their source in rain makes them one, and their drainage, whether above-ground or underground, eventually to the Ocean, also makes them one.

They are free to mingle, and in a sense they do mingle, for there is a regular water-cycle: see n. 3106 above: and the rivers flow constantly to the sea, and tidal rivers get sea-water for several miles up their estuaries at high tide.

Yet in spite of all this, the laws of gravitation are like a barrier or partition set by Allah, by which the two bodies of water as a whole are always kept apart and distinct. In the case of rivers carrying large quantities of water to the sea, like the Mississippi or the Yangtse-Kiang, the river-water with its silt remains distinct from sea-water for a long distance out at sea. But the wonderful Sign is that the two bodies of water, though they pass through each other, remain distinct bodies, with their distinct functions.

... هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ...

one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter;

... وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَحِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا (٥٣)

yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed.

C3112. In Allah's overall scheme of things, bodies of salt and sweet water, which are adjoining and yet separate, have significant functions. Weaving a harmonious fabric out of these different fibres shows both Allah's power and wisdom.

Incidentally, this verse points to a fact which has only recently been discovered by science. This fact relates to the oceans of the world: they meet and yet each remains separate for Allah has placed "a barrier, a partition" between them. (Eds).

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا ...

54. It is He Who has created man from water:

C3113. The basis of all living matter in the physical world, protoplasm, is water:

Cf. 24:45, notes and 21:30, and notes thereon.

... فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا...

then has He established relationships of lineage and marriage:

C3114. Water is a fluid, unstable thing: yet from it arises the highest form of life known to us, in this world, man.

And man has not only the functions and characteristics of the noblest animals, but his abstract relationships are also typical of his highest nature. He can trace lineage and pedigree, and thus remember and commemorate a long line of ancestors, to whom he is bound by ties of piety, which no mere animals can do.

Further, there is the union in marriage: it is not only like the physical union of animals, but it gives rise to relationships arising out of the sexes of individuals who were not otherwise related to each other. These are physical and social facts.

But behind them, again is the symbolic lesson of spiritual contrasts; as there is a long way to go between water and man, so there is a long way to go between an ordinary man and him who is lifted up to divine Light. As opposite sexes, though different in function, are one and contribute to each other's happiness, so person of diverse talents may unite in the spiritual would for their own highest good and in the service of Allah.

... وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا (٥٤)

for thy Lord has power (over all things).

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ...

55. Yet do they worship, besides Allah, things that can neither profit them nor harm them:

... وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَى رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا (٥٥)

and the Misbeliever is a helper (of Evil), against his own Lord!

C3115. Here is the highest contrast of all-material things which are inert, and Allah, Whose goodness and power are supreme; Faith and Unfaith, meriting glad tidings and admonition; the selfish man who is self-centred, and the man of God, who works for others without reward.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٥٦)

56. But thee We only sent to give glad tidings and admonition.

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِلَّا مَن شَاءَ أَن يَتَّخِذَ إِلَى رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا (٥٧)

57. Say:

"No reward do I ask of you for it but this: that each one who will may take a (straight) Path to his Lord."

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهِ...

58. And put thy trust in Him Who lives and dies not; and celebrate His praise;

... وَكَفَى بِهِ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا (٥٨)

and enough is He to be acquainted with the faults of His servants --

C3116. Allah knows our faults better than we or anyone else. It is no use hiding anything from Him. We must put our trust completely in Him. His care is for all, and He is Allah Most Gracious.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ...

59. He Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between, in six days,

C3117. Cf. 7:54 and n. 1031.

... ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...

and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority):

C3118. See n. 1386 to 10:3.

... الرَّحْمَنُ فَاسْأَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا (٥٩)

Allah, Most Gracious: ask thou, then, about Him of any acquainted (with such things).

C3119. The argument is about the question, in whom shall we put our trust?

Worldly men put their trust in worldly things: the righteous man only in Allah.

The true distinction will be quite clear from a ray of divine knowledge. If you do not see it all clearly, ask of those who possess such knowledge.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْجُدُوا لِلرَّحْمَنِ...

60. When it is said to them, "Adore ye (Allah) Most Gracious!",

... قَالُوا وَمَا الرَّحْمَنُ...

they say, "And what is (Allah) Most Gracious?

... أَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَأْمُرُنَا ...

Shall we adore that which thou commandest us?"

... وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُورًا (٦٠)

and it increases their flight (from the Truth).

C3120. Those who have no spiritual Light cannot understand this precept about putting all our trust in Allah.

It seems to them foolish. They have no faith, or but a superficial faith. They may possibly take the name of Allah on their lips, but they cannot understand the full significance of His title of Rahman (Most Gracious).

Perhaps they are afraid on account of their sins; perhaps they do not see how unbounded is the mercy of Allah. Such men are contrasted against the true servants of Allah, who are described below in 25:63-75.

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُّنِيرًا (٦١)

61. Blessed is He Who made Constellations in the skies, and placed therein a Lamp and a Moon giving light;

C3121. The glorious Lamp of the skies is the Sun; and next to him is the Moon, which gives borrowed light.

The Constellations of course include the Signs of the Zodiac, which mark the path of the planets in the heavens.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً...

62. And it is He Who made the Night and the Day to follow each other:

... لِّمَنْ أَرَادَ أَن يَذَّكَّرَ أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا (٦٢)

for such as have the will to celebrate His praises or to show their gratitude.

C3122. The scenes of the phenomenal world are Signs of the Self-Revelation of Allah, for those who understand and who have the will to merge their wills in His. This they do;

- by praising Him, which means understanding something of His nature, and
- by gratitude to Him, which means carrying out His Will, and doing good to their fellow-creatures.

These two attitudes of mind and heart give rise to various consequences in their lives, which are detailed in the following verse.

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا...

63. And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility,

... وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا (٦٣)

and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace!"

C3123. Ignorant: in a moral sense.

Address: in the aggressive sense.

Their humility is shown in two ways:

- to those in real search of knowledge, they give such knowledge as they have and as the recipients can assimilate;
- to those who merely dispute, they do not speak harshly, but say "Peace!", as much as to say,

  "May it be well with you, may you repent and be better"; or

  "May Allah give me peace from such wrangling"; or

  "Peace, and Good-bye; let me leave you!"

وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا (٦٤)

64. Those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrate and standing;

C3124. Humble prayer brings them nearer to Allah.

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ...

65. Those who say,

"Our Lord! avert from us the Wrath of Hell,

... إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا (٦٥)

for its Wrath is indeed an affliction grievous --

C3125. This is a prayer of humility:

such a person relies, not on any good works which he may have done, but on the Grace and Mercy of Allah; and he shows a lively sense of the Day of Judgment, when every action will weigh for or against a soul.

إِنَّهَا سَاءتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا (٦٦)

66. "Evil indeed is it as an abode, and as a place to rest in;"

C3126. The misery which results from sin is not only grievous to live in **("an abode")** but also grievous **"to rest in"** or "to stand in", if it be only for a short time.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا...

67. Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly,

... وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَٰلِكَ قَوَامًا (٦٧)

but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes);

C3127. In ordinary spending this is a wise rule. But even in charity, in which we give of our best, it is not expected that we should be extravagant, i.e., that we should either do it for show, to impress other people, or do it thoughtlessly, which would be the case if we "rob Peter to pay Paul".

We should certainly not be niggardly, but we should remember everyone's rights, including our own, and strike a perfectly just balance between them.

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ...

68. Those who invoke not, with Allah, any other god,

وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ...

nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred, except for just cause,

not commit fornication --

C3128. Here three things are expressly condemned:

- false worship, which is a crime against Allah;
- the taking of life, which is a crime against our fellow-creatures; and
- fornication, which is a crime against our self-respect, against ourselves.

Every crime is against Allah, His creatures, and ourselves, but some may be viewed more in relation to one than to another.

The prohibition against taking life is qualified: "except for just cause,": e.g., in judicial punishment for murder, or in self-preservation, which may include not only self-defence in the legal sense, but also the clearing out of

pests, and the provision of meat under conditions of Halal.- see n. 698 to 5:5. After this comes a long parenthesis, which ends with verse 71 below.

... وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا (٦٨)

and any that does this (not only) meets punishment.

يُضَاعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ فِيهِ مُهَانًا (٦٩)

69. (But) the Penalty on the Day of Judgment will be doubled to him, and he will dwell therein in ignominy-

C3129. The three crimes just mentioned are specially detestable and infamous, and as ignominy will be added to other punishments, the penalty will be double that of ordinary punishment.

إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا...

70. Unless he repents, believes, and works righteous deeds,

... فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ...

for Allah will change the evil of such persons into good,

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٧٠)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C3130. But even in the case of great crimes, if there is true repentance as tested by a changed life in conduct, Allah's Mercy is available, and it will transform the repentant's nature from evil to good.

وَمَن تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا (٧١)

71. And whoever repents and does good has truly turned to Allah with an (acceptable) conversion --

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ ...

72. Those who witness no falsehood,

C3131. Witness no falsehood has two significations, both implied in this passage:

- those who give no evidence that is false; and
- those who do not assist at anything which implies fraud or falsehood.

... وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا (٧٢)

and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable (avoidance);

C3132. There is not only condemnation of positive falsehood or of being mixed up with things implying falsehood; but futilities -vain random talk, unedifying jokes, useless show, etc.- are all condemned.

If a good man finds himself in such an affair, he must withdraw from it in an honourable, dignified way, not in a fussy arrogant way.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَعُمْيَانًا (٧٣)

73. Those who, when they are admonished with the Signs of their Lord, droop not down at them as if they were deaf or blind:

C3133. Kharra may mean:

- to fall down,
- to snore,
- to droop down as if the person were bored or inattentive, or
  did not wish to see or hear or pay attention.

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ...

74. And those who pray,

... رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ...

"Our Lord! grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes,

C3134. We must also pray for the maintenance of Allah's Law after us, through our wives and descendants: in our eyes they should not be mere accidents or play-things, but a real comfort and fulfilment of our spiritual longings.

Perhaps, through them, as well through ourselves, we may, by Allah's grace, be able to give a lead for truth and righteousness.

... وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا (٧٤)

and give us (the grace) to lead the righteous."

C3135. Let us recapitulate the virtues of the true servants of Allah:

1. they are humble and forbearing to those below them in spiritual worth;
2. they are constantly, by adoration, in touch with Allah;
3. they always remember the Judgment in the Hereafter;
4. they are moderate in all things;
5. they avoid treason to Allah, to their fellow-creatures, and to themselves;
6. they give a wide berth not only to falsehood but to futility;
7. they pay attention, both in mind and manner, to the Signs of their Lord;
8. their ambition is to bring up their families in righteousness and to lead in all good.

A fine code of individual and social ethics, a ladder of spiritual development, open to all.

أُولَٰئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا...

75. Those are the ones who will be rewarded with the highest place in heaven, because of their patient constancy;

... وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيهَا تَحِيَّةً وَسَلَامًا (٧٥)

therein shall they be met with salutations and peace,

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

76. Dwelling therein --

... حَسُنَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا (٧٦)

how beautiful an abode and place of rest!

...قُلْ مَا يَعْبَأُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ

77. Say (to the rejecters):

"My Lord is not uneasy because of you if ye call not on Him,

C3136. Let not the wicked think that it causes Allah any annoyance or uneasiness if they do not serve or worship Him. He is high above all needs. But He turns in His Mercy to all who call on Him.

For those who arrogantly reject Him, the evil consequences of their rejection are inevitable, and must soon come to pass. (R).

... فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا (٧٧)

but ye have indeed rejected (Him), and soon will come the inevitable (punishment)!"

إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

verily! With me is my Lord, He will guide me.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Shu'ara'

الشُّعَرَاء

Introduction and Summary

This Surah begins a new series of four Surahs (26-29), which illustrate the contrast between the spirit of Prophecy and spiritual Light and the reactions to it in the communities among whom it appeared, by going back to old Prophet and the stories of the Past, as explained in the Introduction to Surah 17.

In this particular Surah we have the story of Moses in his fight with Pharaoh and of Pharaoh's discomfiture. Other Prophets mentioned are Abraham, Noah, Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb. The lesson is drawn that the Quran is a continuation and fulfilment of previous Revolution, and is pure Truth, unlike poetry of vain poets.

Chronologically the Surah belongs to the middle Makkan period, when the contact of the Light of Prophecy with the milieu of Pagan Makkah was testing the Makkans in their most arrogant mood.

Summary- The conflict of Unbelief with Truth is vain; so was the conflict of Pharaoh with Moses; Pharaoh's magicians bowed to the Truth, and Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned (26:1-68, and C. 164).

Nor did Abraham's people gain anything by their resisting of the Truth he preached, and Noah's people perished by their Unbelief (26:69-122, and C. 165).

Hud warned his people against reliance on their material strength and Salih against sacrilege, but in both cases the evil ones were brought low (26:123-159, and C. 166).

Lut had to deal with unspeakable crimes, and Shu'ayb against dishonest dealings and mischief; their teaching was rejected, but the rejecters were wiped out (26:160-191, and C. 167).

S0, when the spirit of Prophecy came to Makkah, it was resisted by the votaries of evil: but Truth is not like vain poetry, and must triumph at last (26:192-227, and C. 168).

C.164 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26:1-68)

Allah's Plan works unceasingly: His Light
Shines none the less brightly, because some
Reject it or mock at it. Moses was freed
From all fear when Allah gave him His Signs
And sent him to Pharaoh: he boldly
Proclaimed the Message, and won the wise ones
Of Egypt: the rejecters, with Pharaoh, perished,
And their heritage passed to worthier hands.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طسم (١)

1. Ta Sin Mim.

C3137. This is a combination of three Abbreviated Letters, as to which, generally, see Appendix 1, printed at the end of Surah 2.

This particular combination occurs here and at the head of Surah 28, while the intervening Surah 27 has it in the syncopated form Ta Sin. None of the explanatory conjecture which I have seen carries conviction for me. If the letters stand *Tur al Sinin* (Mount Sinai) and *Musa* (Moses) whose story fills a large part of the Surah, why is the letters Mim omitted in Surah 27, where the same meaning would apply?

There is however, one fact to which I should like to draw attention. There are eleven sections in this Surah, and eight of them end with the word ***Rahim*** (with the final *Mim*). The three exceptions are section 2 and 3, and section 11.

But section 2 and 3 are part of the story of Moses, which is completed in section 4, and that ends with *"Rahim"*.

The main argument in section 11 ends at verse 217, which ends with *Rahim*. We can say that the whole Surah is based on a refrain in the word *"Rahim"*.

Whether this has any bearing on our present enquiry I cannot say. My own position is that where we have material, we should pursue our researches, but we should never be dogmatic in such matters, as some Mysteries can never be solved by mere research.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢)

2. These are Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear.

C3138. Cf. 5:15, and n. 716.

The comparison of Allah's revelation with Light is continued.

لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ أَلَّا يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ (٣)

3. It may be thou frettest thy soul with grief, that they do not become Believers.

C3139. "They" are the Pagans of Makkah.

From a human point of view it was a great disappointment to Allah's Messenger in the middle period of his Makkan ministry that the Makkan could not be brought to believe in the Truth.

إِن نَّشَأْ نُنَزِّلْ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً...

4. If (such) were Our Will, We could send down to them from the sky a Sign,

C3140. If it had been Allah's Will and Plan to force people's will, He could quite easily have forced the Makkans.

But His Will and Plan work differently. His revelation is meant to train man's own will so that it conforms to Allah's beneficent purpose.

...فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ (٤)

to which they would bend their necks in humility.

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ مُحْدَثٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِينَ (٥)

5. But there comes not to them a newly-revealed message from (Allah) Most Gracious, but they turn away therefrom.

...فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا

6. They have indeed rejected (the Message):

...فَسَيَأْتِيهِمْ أَنبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (٦)

so they will know soon (enough) the truth of what they mocked at!

C3141. They may laugh at Allah's Message of righteousness, but they will soon see the power of Truth and realise the real significance of the movement which they opposed.

Where were the Pagans of Makkah after Badr, and still more, after the bloodless surrender of Makkah?

And the meaning may be applied universally in all history.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَمْ أَنبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ (٧)

7. Do they not look at the earth -- how many noble things of all kinds we have produced therein?

C3142. If evil has a little run in this life, let them not run away with the notion that the world is for evil. They have only to look round at the physical and moral world around them, and they would be undeceived.

But they are blind and without the Faith (the Light) which would open their eyes.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً...

8. Verily, in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٨)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٩)

9. And verily, thy Lord is He, the **Exalted in Might**, Most Merciful.

C3143. One Who is able to carry out all His Will and Plans.

See n. 2818 to 22:40.

Section 2

وَإِذْ نَادَى رَبُّكَ مُوسَى ...

10. Behold, thy Lord called Moses:

C3144. The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses felt diffident about undertaking his commission;

- how Allah reassured him;
- how he went to Pharaoh with "the Signs";

- how Pharaoh and his people rejected him;
- how their blasphemy recoiled on themselves, but the cause of Allah triumphed;

in other words the point here is the reaction of a wicked people to the light that was held up to them, considered in its relation to the mind of Allah's Messenger.

أَنِ ائْتِ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٠) ...

"Go to the people of iniquity --

قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ...

11. "The people of Pharaoh:

أَلَا يَتَّقُونَ (١١)...

will they not fear Allah?"

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَن يُكَذِّبُونِ (١٢)

12. He said:

"O my Lord! I do fear that they will charge me with falsehood:

وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ إِلَى هَارُونَ (١٣)

13. "**My breast will be straitened**, and my speech may not go (smoothly):

so send unto Aaron.

C3145. As we should say in English, "My heart would fail me, and my tongue cleave to my mouth."

Moses had an impediment in his speech, and his mission was risky: see next note.

But Allah's Plan works in wondrous ways. Aaron was given to assist him in his mission, and Moses' shortcomings were transformed by Allah's grace into power, so that he became the most powerful leader of Israel.

وَلَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنبٌ فَأَخَافُ أَن يَقْتُلُونِ (١٤)

14. "And (further), they have a charge of crime against me; and I fear they may slay me."

C3146. Moses was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, as narrated in his personal story in 20:39-40 and n. 2563.

When he was grown-up he saw an Egyptian smiling an Israelite, and as the Israelites were being generally oppressed by the Egyptians, Moses' anger was roused, and he slew the Egyptian.

He then fled to the Midianite country in the Sinai peninsula, where he received the divine commission. But the charge of slaying the Egyptian was hanging against him.

He was also apparently quick-tempered. But Allah's grace cured his temper and he became wise; his impediment in speech, for he stood up boldly to speak to Pharaoh; and his fear, for he dared the Egyptians with Allah's Signs, and they were afraid of him.

قَالَ كَلَّا...

15. Allah said: "By no means!

...فَاذْهَبَا بِآيَاتِنَا ...

proceed then, both of you, with Our Signs;

... إِنَّا مَعَكُم مُّسْتَمِعُونَ (١٥)

We are with you, and will listen (to your call).

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا ...

16. "So go forth, both of you, to Pharaoh, and say:

... إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦)

'We have been sent by the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds;

أَنْ أَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (١٧)

17. "'Send thou with us the Children of Israel.'"

قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ (١٨)

18. (Pharaoh) said: "Did we not cherish thee as a child among us, and didst thou not stay in our midst many years of thy life?

C3147. There is here a little play of wit on the part of Pharaoh. When Moses speaks of the "Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds", Pharaoh says:

"Who cherished you?

Did we not bring you up as a child?

Did you not grow up among us?"

By implication Pharaoh suggest that he is the cherisher of Moses, and in any case Pharaoh laid claim to godhead himself.

وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَتَكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٩)

19. "And thou didst a deed of thine which (thou knowest) thou didst, and thou art an ungrateful (wretch)!"

C3148. Further, Pharaoh reminds Moses of his having slain the Egyptian, and taunts him:

"You are not only a murderer: you are an ungrateful wretch" (using *kafir* again in a double sense) "to have killed one of the race that brought you up!"

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذًا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (٢٠)

20. Moses said:

"I did it then, when I was in error.

C3149. What is Moses' reply?

He is no longer afraid. He tells the whole truth, extenuating nothing in his own favour.

"Yes I did it: but I did it under an error."

There are three implications in this:

1. "I was wrong in doing it in a temper and in being hasty;
2. was wrong in taking the law into my own hands, but I repented and asked for Allah's pardon (xxviii. 15-16);
3. that was at a time when I was under your influence, but since then I am a changed man, as Allah has called me."

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ...

21. "So I fled from you (all) when I feared you;

C3150. He accounts for all his movements, much more than Pharaoh had asked for. He has nothing to hide. At that time he was under the influence of fear, and he had fled from him.

Now he is serving Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. He has no fear: he is a messenger.

...فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٢١)

but my Lord has (since) invested me with judgment (and wisdom) and appointed me as one of the messengers.

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٢٢)

22. "And this is the favor with which thou dost reproach me -- that thou hast enslaved the Children of Israel"

C3151. Pharaoh had called Moses ungrateful and reproached him with all the favours which Moses had received from the Egyptians.

"What favours?" he says; "Do you count it also as a favour to me that you have enslaved my brethren the Children of Israel?"

Moses was now speaking as a Prophet of Allah, not as an individual. Any individual favours he may have received were blotted out by the oppression of his people. (R).

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٣)

23. Pharaoh said: "And what is the 'Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds?'"

C3152. Moses having eliminated all personalities, the argument now comes up to the highest plane of all,-the attributes of Allah and His mercies. Moses had put forward this before, as implied in verse 16 above, but Pharaoh had twisted it into personalities.

Now we come back to the real issue. It may have been in the same sitting, or it may have been in a later sitting. (R).

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

24. (Moses) said:

"The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between --

...إِن كُنتُم مُّوقِنِينَ (٢٤)

if ye want to be quite sure."

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْتَمِعُونَ (٢٥)

25. (Pharaoh) said to those around: "Do ye not listen (to what he says)?"

C3153. Moses had stiffed up the wrath of Pharaoh both by putting forward the name of the One True God as against Pharaoh's pretended godhead, and by suggesting that any man of judgment would understand Allah's majesty.

While Pharaoh turns to his people in indignation, Moses drives the nail in further:

"He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all between: therefore He is also your God, and the God of your fathers from the beginning. Any other pretensions are false!" (R).

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٢٦)

26. (Moses) said: "Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers from the beginning!"

قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمُ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ (٢٧)

27. (Pharaoh) said: "Truly your messenger who has been sent to you is a veritable madman!"

C3154. Pharaoh is further perturbed. In reply to Moses' statement that Allah, the One True God is also the God of the Egyptians and Pharaoh also, Pharaoh says sarcastically to his Court:

"Look at this 'Messenger' of yours; he seems to be mad!"

But Moses is not abashed. He boldly says what is the truth:

"It is you who are mad! The God Whom I preach is the universal Lord,-of the East and of the West. He reigns wherever you go!"

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

28. (Moses) said: "Lord of the East and the West, and all between!

...إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٢٨)

If ye only had sense!"

قَالَ لَئِنِ اتَّخَذْتَ إِلَٰهًا غَيْرِي لَأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ (٢٩)

29. (Pharaoh) said: "If thou dost put forward any god other than me, I will certainly put thee in prison!"

C3155. Now we come to the crisis. Pharaoh threatens Moses with prison for treason.

Moses remains calm and stiff argues:

"What if I show you a miracle? Will it convince you that I am not mad, and that I have behind me the Lord of all the Worlds?"

قَالَ أَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٠)

30. (Moses) said: "Even if I showed you something clear (and) convincing?"

C3156. The Egyptians were addicted to magic and sorcery. If a true miracle were shown to them, would they believe?

Perhaps they would see the hollowness of their own magic. In fact this actually happened with the Egyptian sorcerers themselves and perhaps with the commonalty.

But Pharaoh and his Court were too arrogant, and battened too much on frauds to yield to Truth.

قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٣١)

31. (Pharaoh) said: "Show it then, if thou tellest the truth!"

فَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (٣٢)

32. So (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)!

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاء لِلنَّاظِرِينَ (٣٣)

33. And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders!

C3157. Cf. 7:107-108.

See the whole passage there, and the notes thereon.

Section 3

قَالَ لِلْمَلَإِ حَوْلَهُ ...

34. (Pharaoh) said to the Chiefs around him:

C3158. In 7:109 it is the Chiefs who say this.

The fact is that it was a general consultation, and this was the general feeling, expressed in words by each to the others.

... إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ (٣٤)

"This is indeed a sorcerer well-versed:

يُرِيدُ أَن يُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُم بِسِحْرِهِ...

35. "His plan is to get you out of your land by his sorcery;

...فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ (٣٥)

then what is it ye counsel?"

قَالُوا أَرْجِهِ وَأَخَاهُ وَابْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ (٣٦)

36. They said:

"Keep him and his brother in suspense (for a while), and dispatch to the Cities heralds to collect --

يَأْتُوكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيمٍ (٣٧)

37. "And bring up to thee all (our) sorcerers well-versed."

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (٣٨)

38. So the sorcerers were got together for the appointment of a day well-known,

C3159. A day well-known: a solemn day of festival: see 20:59.

The object was to get together as large a concourse of people as possible. It was confidently expected that the Egyptian sorcerers with all their organisation would win with their tricks against these amateur Israelites, and so the State cult of the worship of Pharaoh would be fastened on the necks of the people more firmly than ever.

وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنتُم مُّجْتَمِعُونَ (٣٩)

39. And the people were told:

"Are ye (now) assembled? --

لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ إِن كَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ (٤٠)

40. "That we may follow the sorcerers (in religion) if they win?"

C3160. See the last note.

The people are to come and witness the triumph of the State religion, so that they may become the more obedient to Pharaoh and more compliant with the demands of the priests.

The State religion included magic and the worship of Pharaoh.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ أَئِنَّ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِن كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ (٤١)

41. So when the sorcerers arrived, they said to Pharaoh:

"Of course -- shall we have a (suitable) reward if we win?"

C3161. There was no such thing as pure loyalty to an exploiting ruler like this Pharaoh. The sorcerers, who were probably also priests, were venal, and they hoped to establish their own hold on both king and people by the further enrichment of themselves and their order.

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَّمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (٤٢)

42. He said: "Yea, (and more) -- for ye shall in that case be (raised to posts) nearest (to my person)."

قَالَ لَهُم مُّوسَى أَلْقُوا مَا أَنتُم مُّلْقُونَ (٤٣)

43. Moses said to them: "Throw ye -- that which ye are about to throw!"

C3162. The euphemism implies a taunt, as if Moses had said:

> "I know about your tricks! You pretend to throw ropes and rods, and make people believe they are snakes. But now come on!"

فَأَلْقَوْا حِبَالَهُمْ وَعِصِيَّهُمْ...

44. So they threw their ropes and their rods,

...وَقَالُوا بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ (٤٤)

and said: "By the might of Pharaoh, it is we who will certainly win!"

C3163. Though Pharaoh claimed to be a god, it is not likely that those nearest to him - his priests and sorcerers - believed such a thing! But it was game of mutual pretence before the world. And so they appeal to his "divine" power.

فَأَلْقَى مُوسَى عَصَاهُ...

45. Then Moses threw his rod,

...فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ (٤٥)

when behold, it straightway swallows up all the falsehoods which they fake!

C3164. The sorcerers' ropes and rods seemed to have become serpents, but the rod of Moses was mightier than all of them and quickly swallowed them up.

So truth is more powerful than tricks and win expose and destroy them.

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ (٤٦)

46. Then did the sorcerers fall down, prostrate in adoration,

قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٧)

47. Saying:

"We believe in the Lord of the Worlds,

رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (٤٨)

48. "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

قَالَ آمَنتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ...

49. Said (Pharaoh):

"Believe ye in him before I give you permission?

...إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ...

Surely he is your leader, who has taught you sorcery!

But soon shall ye know!

C3165. The sorcerers knew that they had met something very different from their tricks. Allah's power worked on them and they professed the True God.

As they represented the intelligence of the community, it may be presumed that they carried the intelligence of Egypt with them and perhaps some of the commonalty, who were impressed by the dramatic scene!

Hence Pharaoh's anger, but it is the beginning of his decline!

...لَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٤٩)

"But sure I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will cause you all to die on the cross!"

قَالُوا لَا ضَيْرَ...

50. They said:

"No matter!

...إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا مُنقَلِبُونَ (٥٠)

for us, we shall but return to our Lord!

إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَن يَغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطَايَانَا أَن كُنَّا أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥١)

51. "Only, our desire is that our Lord will forgive us our faults, that we may become foremost among the Believers!"

C3166. This is the core of the lesson enforced in this passage.

What was the reaction of the environment to the Light or Message of Allah?

- It transformed Moses so that he became a fearless leader, one of the foremost in faith.
- From men like Pharaoh and his corrupt court, it called forth obstinacy, spite, and all the tricks and snares of evil, but Evil was defeated on its own ground.
- The magicians were touched by the glorious Light of Allah, and they were ready to suffer tortures and death, their sole ambition (in their transformed state) being to be foremost in Faith!

Section 4

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي إِنَّكُم مُّتَّبَعُونَ (٥٢)

52. By inspiration We told Moses: "Travel by night with My servants; for surely ye shall be pursued."

C3167. The rest of the story -of the plagues of Egypt- is passed over as not germane to the present argument. We come now to the story of Israel leaving Egypt, pursued by Pharaoh.

Here again there are three contrasts:

1. the blind arrogance of the Egyptians, against the development of Allah's Plan;
2. the Faith of Moses, against the fears of his people; and
3. the final deliverance of the Israelites against the destruction of the host of brute force.

فَأَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ (٥٣)

53. Then Pharaoh sent heralds to (all) the Cities,

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيلُونَ (٥٤)

54. (Saying): "These (Israelites) are but a small band,

وَإِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَائِظُونَ (٥٥)

55. "And they are raging furiously against us;

وَإِنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حَاذِرُونَ (٥٦)

56. "But we are a multitude amply fore-warned."

فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُم مِّن جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٥٧)

57. So We expelled them from gardens, springs,

C3168. In deference to almost unanimous authority I have translated this passage (verses 58-60) as if it were a parenthetical statement of Allah's purpose.

Personally I prefer another construction.

According to that, verses 58-59 will be part of Pharaoh's proclamations; "We have dispossessed the Israelites from everything good in the land, and made them our slaves";

and verse 60 only will be parenthetical;

"Poor ignorant men! You may oppress those who are helpless, but We (i.e. Allah) have declared that they shall inherit all these things",

as they certainly did (for a time) in the Land of Palestine.

وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ (٥٨)

58. Treasures, and every kind of honorable position;

كَذَٰلِكَ...

59. Thus it was,

...وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٥٩)

but We made the Children of Israel inheritors of such things.

C3169. The Children of Israel certainly inherited the gardens, springs, treasures, and honourable positions in Palestine after many years' wanderings in the wilderness.

But when they were false to Allah, they lost them again, and another people (the Muslims) inherited them when they were true in Faith.

"Of such things": literally, "of them".

فَأَتْبَعُوهُم مُّشْرِقِينَ (٦٠)

60. So they pursued them at sunrise.

C3170. The story is here resumed after the parenthesis of verses 58-60.

فَلَمَّا تَرَاءى الْجَمْعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَى إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ (٦١)

61. And when the two bodies saw each other, the people of Moses said: "We are sure to be overtaken."

قَالَ كَلَّا...

62. (Moses) said: "By no means!

...إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ (٦٢)

my Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!

C3171. Guide me: i.e., show me some way of escape from danger.

This actually happened for Pharaoh's host was drowned. The faith of Moses stands in strong contrast to the fears of his people.

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنِ اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ...

63. Then We told Moses by inspiration: "Strike the sea with thy rod."

...فَانفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ (٦٣)

So it divided, and each separate part become like the huge, firm mass of a mountain.

وَأَزْلَفْنَا ثَمَّ الْآخَرِينَ (٦٤)

64. And We made the other party approach thither.

C3172. The miracle was twofold:

1. Moses with his people passed safely through the sea;
2. and Pharaoh and his great host were drowned in the sea.

وَأَنجَيْنَا مُوسَى وَمَن مَّعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ (٦٥)

65. We delivered Moses and all who were with him;

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (٦٦)

66. But We drowned the others.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً...

67. Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٦٧)

but most of them do not believe.

C3173. As it was then, so it is now. In spite of the obvious Signs of Allah, people who are blind in their obstinate resistance to Truth accomplish their own destruction, while humble, persecuted men of Faith are transformed by the Light of Allah, and obtain salvation.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٦٨)

68. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C3174. Nothing that the powers of evil can do, will ever defeat the merciful Purpose of Allah. Evil, in resisting good, will effect its own destruction.

C.165 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26:69-122)

Abraham patiently argued with his people
About Allah's Truth; prayed for wisdom

And righteous, for himself, his father,
And future generations; and taught Truth
About the Hereafter. Noah preached
To a world of Unfaith, and would not reject
The humble and lowly: his arrogant rejecters
Were brought low: in him and his following
Were vindicated Allah's righteous Purpose and Mercy.

Section 5

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٦٩)

69. And rehearse to them (something of) Abraham's story.

C3175. For the argument of this Surah the incidents in Abraham's life are not relevant and are not mentioned. What is mentioned is:

- the steps by which he taught about the sin of false worship, in the form of a Dialogue;
- the aims of a righteous man not only in his individual life, but for his ancestors and posterity, in the form of a Prayer;
- and a picture of the Future Judgment, in the form of a vision.

is covered by verses 70-82; by 83-87; and by 88-102.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٧٠)

70. Behold, he said to his father and his people: "What worship ye?"

قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَظَلُّ لَهَا عَاكِفِينَ (٧١)

71. They said: "We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them."

C3176. They want to show their true and assiduous devotion. But Abraham goes at once to the heart of the matter by asking:

"To whom is your devotion paid?
Is the object worthy of it?"

قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُمْ إِذْ تَدْعُونَ (٧٢)

72. He said:

"Do they listen to you when ye call (on them),

أَوْ يَنفَعُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ (٧٣)

73. "Or do you good or harm?"

قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٤)

74. They said: "Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus (what we do)."

قَالَ أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا كُنتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ (٧٥)

75. He said:

"Do ye then see whom ye have been worshipping --

أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمُ الْأَقْدَمُونَ (٧٦)

76. "Ye and your fathers before you? --

فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّي ...

77. "For they are enemies to me;

C3177. The things that you worship are enemies to mankind: let me testify from my own personal experience: they are enemies to me: they can do me no good, but would lead me astray.

Contrast with their impotence or their power of mischief the One True God Whom I worship: He created me and all the Worlds: He cherishes me and guides me; He takes care of me; and when I die, He will give me new life; He will forgive me and grant me final Salvation.

Will you then come to this true worship?

How can you doubt, after seeing the contrast of the one with the other?

Is it not as the contrast between Light and Darkness?'

... إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٧)

not so the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds;

الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ (٧٨)

78. "Who created me, and it is He Who guides me;

وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ (٧٩)

79. "Who gives me food and drink,

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ (٨٠)

80. "And when I am ill, it is He Who cures me;

وَالَّذِي يُمِيتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ (٨١)

81. "Who will cause me to die, and then to live (again);

وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَن يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (٨٢)

82. "And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment...

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ (٨٣)

83. O my Lord! bestow wisdom on me, and join me with the righteous;

C3178. Having shown clearly the distinction between the False and the True, Abraham now shows in the form of a Prayer what his inmost wishes are.

- He wants his own soul enlightened with divine wisdom, and
- his heart and life filled with righteousness;
- he will not be content with working for himself or his own generation: his view extends to all future generations;
- and of course he wishes to attain the goal of the righteous, the Garden of the Bliss of the Divine Countenance;

but he is not content with this;

- for he wants his father and relatives to share in his spiritual joy, so that he can proudly see all whom he can reach, in an honourable station (contrasted with disgrace) on the Day of Judgment.

وَاجْعَل لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (٨٤)

84. "Grant me honorable mention on the tongue of truth among the latest (generations);

C3179. Cf. 19:50. The whole of the passage about Abraham there may be compared with this passage.

وَاجْعَلْنِي مِن وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ (٨٥)

85. "Make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss;

وَاغْفِرْ لِأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (٨٦)

86. "Forgive my father, for that he is among those astray;

وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ (٨٧)

87. "And let me not be in disgrace on the Day when (men) will be raised up --

يَوْمَ لَا يَنفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ (٨٨)

88. The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail,

C3180. Now we have a vision of the Day of Judgment.

Nothing will then avail except a pure heart; all sorts of the so-called "good deeds" of this world, without the motive of purity, will be useless.

The contrast of the Garden of Bliss with the Fire of Misery will be plainly visible. Evil will be shown in its true colours,-isolated, helpless, cursing and despairing; and all chances will then have been lost.

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (٨٩)

89. "But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart;

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٩٠)

90. "To the righteous, the Garden will be brought near,

C3181. The Good will only see good (the Garden of Bliss), and the Evil will only see evil (the Fire of Hell).

The type of this contrast is shown to us in the world of our spiritual sense even in this life.

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ (٩١)

91. "And to those straying in Evil, the Fire will be placed in full view;

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ (٩٢)

92. "And it shall be said to them:

'Where are the (gods) ye worshipped --

مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنتَصِرُونَ (٩٣)

93. "'Besides Allah?

Can they help you or help themselves?'

فَكُبْكِبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ (٩٤)

94. "Then they will be thrown headlong into the (Fire) -- they and those straying in Evil,

C3182. The false gods, being devils or personified false fancies, will be all involved in the punishment of Hell, together with their worshippers, and the ultimate sources of evil, the hosts of Iblis or Satan.

وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ (٩٥)

95. "And the whole hosts of Iblis together.

قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٩٦)

96. "They will say there in their mutual bickerings:

تَاللَّهِ إِن كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٩٧)

97. "'By Allah, we were truly in an error manifest,

C3183. Error-manifest.-

'our error is now plainly manifest, but it should have been manifest to us before it was too late, because the Signs of Allah were always around us'.

This will be said by the ungodly, whose eyes will then be fully opened.

إِذْ نُسَوِّيكُم بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩٨)

98. "'When we held you as equals with the Lord of the Worlds;

وَمَا أَضَلَّنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٩٩)

99. "'And our seducers were only those who were steeped in guilt.

C3184. They now see that the people who seduced them were themselves evil and subject to the penalties of evil, and their seductions were frauds. They feel that they ought to have seen it before.

For who would deliberately follow the paths of those condemned to misery and punishment?

How simple they were not to see the true character of their seducers, though they had been warned again and again against them! It was their own folly that made them accept such obviously false guidance!

فَمَا لَنَا مِن شَافِعِينَ (١٠٠)

100. "'Now, then, we have none to intercede (for us),

وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ (١٠١)

101. "'Nor a single friend to feel (for us).

فَلَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠٢)

102. "'Now if we only had a chance of return, we shall truly be of those who believe!'"

C3185. This apparent longing for a chance of return is dishonest. If they were sent back, they would certainly return to their evil ways: 6:27-28.

Besides, they have had numerous chances already in this life, and they have used them for mischief or evil.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً...

103. Verily in this is a Sign,

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٠٣)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٠٤)

104. And verily the Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

Section 6

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٠٥)

105. The people of Noah rejected the messengers.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٠٦)

106. Behold, their brother Noah said to them:
"Will ye not fear (Allah)?

C3186. Noah's generation had lost all faith and abandoned themselves to evil. They had rejected the Message of messengers previously sent to the world.

Noah was sent to them as one of themselves ("their brother"). His life was open before them: he had proved himself pure in heart and conduct (like the holy Prophet of Islam long after him), and worthy of every trust.

Would they fear Allah and follow his advice?

They could see that he had no ends of his own to serve. Would they not listen to him?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٠٧)

107. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust:

C3187. Amin= one to whom a trust has been given, with several shades of meaning implied: e.g.,

- worthy of trust,
- bound to deliver his trust, as a prophet is bound to deliver his Message,
- bound to act entirely as directed by the trust, as a prophet is bound to give only the Message of Allah, and not add anything of his own, and
- not seeking any interest of his own.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١٠٨)

108. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

109. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٩)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds:

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١١٠)

110. "So fear Allah, and obey me."

C3188. Note how the repetition rounds off the argument. See n. 3186 above.

قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْذَلُونَ (١١١)

111. They said: "Shall we believe in thee when it is the meanest that follow thee?"

C3189. The leaders of the people are speaking, as the Quraish leaders spoke in the time of the holy Prophet.

> "We know that thou hast been trustworthy in thy life. But look at the 'rag tag and bob tail' that follow thee! Dost thou expect us to be like them or to be classed with them?"

His answer was:

> "I know nothing against them; if they have done any wrong, or are only hypocrites, they are answerable to Allah; how can I drive them away from me, seeing that I am expressly sent to admonish all people?"

قَالَ وَمَا عِلْمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١١٢)

112. He said:

"And what do I know as to what they do?

إِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّي...

113. "Their account is only with my Lord,

...لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ (١١٣)

if ye could (but) understand.

وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١٤)

114. "I am not one to drive away those who believe.

C3190. Cf. 11:29.

All people who have faith have the right to come and listen to Allah's Word and receive Allah's Mercy, whether they are publicans and sinners, "Harijans" and low-caste men, men of "superior" or "inferior" races. The Prophet of Allah welcomes them all, as His Message has to shine before the whole world. (R).

إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١١٥)

115. "I am sent only to warn plainly in public."

قَالُوا لَئِن لَّمْ تَنتَهِ يَا نُوحُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ (١١٦)

116. They said: "If thou desist not, O Noah! thou shalt be stoned (to death)."

C3191. Two other cases occur to me where prophets of Allah were threatened with death by stoning:

- one was Abraham (19:46),
- and the other was Shu'ayb (11:91).

In neither case did the threats deter them from carrying out their mission.

On the contrary the threats recoiled on those who threatened. So also did it happen in the case of Noah and the holy Prophet.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ (١١٧)

117. He said:

"O my Lord! truly my people have rejected me.

فَافْتَحْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا...

118. "Judge thou, then, between me and them openly,

...وَنَجِّنِي وَمَن مَّعِي مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١٨)

and deliver me and those of the Believers who are with me."

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَمَن مَّعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (١١٩)

119. So we delivered him and those with him, in the Ark filled (with all creatures).

C3192. The story of Noah's Flood is told in 11:36-48. Here the point emphasised is Noah's patience and constancy against threats, and the triumph and preservation of Allah's Truth even though the world was ranged against it.

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا بَعْدُ الْبَاقِينَ (١٢٠)

120. Thereafter We drowned those who remained behind.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً

121. Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٢١)

but most of them do not believe.

C3193. This and the following verse run like a refrain throughout this Surah, and give the key-note to the subject-matter: how the Message of Allah is preached, how it is rejected in all ages, and how it triumphs at last, through the Mercy of Allah.

See 26:8-9, 68-69, 103-104, here (121-122), 139-140, 158-159, 174-175, and 190-191. (R).

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٢٢)

122. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C.166 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26: 123-159)

The 'Ad were addicted to arrogance;

They exulted in material strength

And possessions, and had no faith but in force:
They were brought low, as were the Thamud,
Who gave way to extravagance, and were guilty
Of sacrilege in destroying a symbol
Of justice and fair-dealing: their repentance
Was too late; they were blotted out
Of the earth for the mischief they had made.

Section 7

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٢٣)

123. The 'Ad (people) rejected the messengers.

C3194. See n. 1040 to 7:65 for the 'Ad people and their location.

Here the emphasis is on the fact that they were materialists believing in brute force, and felt secure in their fortresses and resources, but were found quite helpless when Allah's Message came and they rejected it.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٢٤)

124. Behold, their brother Hud said to them:
"Will ye not fear (Allah)?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٢٥)

125. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

C3195. See n. 3187 to 26:107 above.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١٢٦)

126. "So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

127. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٢٧)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ (١٢٨)

128. "Do ye build a landmark on every high place to amuse yourselves?

C3196. Any merely material civilisation prides itself on show and parade. Its votaries scatter monuments for all sorts of things in conspicuous places-monuments which commemorate deeds and events which are forgotten in a few generations!

Cf. Shelley's poem on Ozymandias:

"I am Ozymandias, King of Kings!

Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair! ....

Boundless and bare the lonely and level sands stretch far away!"

وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ (١٢٩)

129. "And do ye get for yourselves fine buildings in the hope of living therein (forever)?

وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُم بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ (١٣٠)

130. "And when ye exert your strong hand, do ye do it like men of absolute power?

C3197. "Without any responsibility or consideration for those who come within your power?"

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١٣١)

131. "Now fear Allah, and obey me.

C3198. See n. 3188 above.

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُم بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ (١٣٢)

132. "Yea, fear Him Who has bestowed on you freely all that ye know.

C3199. The gifts are described generally, immaterial and material.

"All that ye know" includes not only material things, but knowledge and the faculties by which knowledge may be used for human well-being, all that makes life beautiful and refined.

"Cattle" means wealth generally, and "sons" means population and manpower. "Gardens and Springs" are things that contribute to the delight and pleasure of man.

أَمَدَّكُم بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ (١٣٣)

133. "Freely has He bestowed on you cattle and sons --

وَجَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (١٣٤)

134. And Gardens and Springs.

إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٣٥)

135. "Truly I fear for you the Penalty of a Great Day."

C3200. "But you have misused all those gifts, and you will suffer the inevitable penalties for your misuse and or your ingratitude."

قَالُوا سَوَاء عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَظْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُن مِّنَ الْوَاعِظِينَ (١٣٦)

136. They said:

"It is the same to us whether thou admonish us or be not among (our) Admonishers!

C3201. "We are not going to attend to you whether you preach to us or not."

The construction of the second clause, **"or be not among our admonishers"** is a rapier cut at Hud, as if they had said:

"Oh yes! we have heard plenty of admonishers like you!"

See the next verse.

إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣٧)

137. "This is no other than a customary device of the ancients,

C3202. They said, as many of our modern enemies of religion say,

> "you are only reviving an ancient superstition, a dope of the crowd; there is no such thing as a Hereafter, or the sort of punishments you announce!"

وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ (١٣٨)

138. "And we are not the ones to receive Pains and Penalties!"

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ...

139. So they rejected him,
and We destroyed them,

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً...

verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٩)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٤٠)

140. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

Section 8

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٤١)

141. The Thamud (people) rejected the messengers.

C3203. For the Thamud people see n. 1043 t0 7:73.

They were great builders in stone and a people with agricultural wealth, but they were an exclusive people and oppressed the poor.

The point emphasised here is:

"How long will your wealth last, especially if you depress your own people and dishonour Allah's Signs by sacrilege?"

The inscriptions on the Thamud remains of rock-cut buildings in Al-Hijr are described in the Appendix VII at the end of this Surah.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٤٢)

142. Behold, their brother Salih said to them:
"Will you fear (Allah)?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٤٣)

143. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١٤٤)

144. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

145. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٤٥)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِنِينَ (١٤٦)

146. "Will ye be left secure, in (the enjoyment of) all that ye have here? --

فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (١٤٧)

147. "Gardens and Springs,

وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيمٌ (١٤٨)

148. "And corn-fields and date-palms with spathes near breaking (with the weight of fruit)?

C3204. The date palm flowers on a long spathe: when the flowers develop into fruit, the heavy ones hang with the load of fruit.

The Thamud evidently were proud of their skill in producing corn and fruit and in hewing fine dwellings out of rocks, like the later dwellings of Roman times in the town of Petra.

وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَارِهِينَ (١٤٩)

149. "And ye carve house out of (rocky) mountains with great skill.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١٥٠)

150. "But fear Allah and obey me;

وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (١٥١)

151. "And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant --

C3205. They are told:

"All your skill is very well; but cultivate virtue and do not follow the ways of those who put forward extravagant claims for men's powers and material resources, or who lead lives of extravagance in luxury and self-indulgence; that makes mischief: but the door of repentance is open: win you repent?"

الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ (١٥٢)

152. "Who make mischief in the land, and mend not (their ways)."

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ (١٥٣)

153. They said:

"Thou art only the of those bewitched!

C3206. They think he is talking like a madman, and they say so.

مَا أَنتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا...

154. "Thou art no more than a mortal like us:

...فَأْتِ بِآيَةٍ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (١٥٤)

then bring us a Sign, if thou tellest the truth!"

قَالَ هَٰذِهِ نَاقَةٌ...

155. He said: "Here is a she-camel:

...لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (١٥٥)

she has a right of watering, and ye have a right of watering, (severally) on a day appointed.

C3207. For this she-camel, see n. 1044 to 7:73.

The she-camel was to be a Sign and a test-case. Would they respect her rights of watering (and pasturage)?

وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٥٦)

156. "Touch her not with harm, lest the Penalty of a Great Day seize you."

فَعَقَرُوهَا...

157. But they hamstrung her:

...فَأَصْبَحُوا نَادِمِينَ (١٥٧)

then did they become full of regrets.

C3208. Their regrets were too late. They had themselves asked for a Sign. The Sign had been given to them in the she-camel, which their prophet Salih had put forward as a test-case.

Would they, through that symbol, respect the law' of equity by which all people had rights in water and in the gifts of nature?

They refused to respect that law, and committed sacrilege by deliberately killing the she-camel. They themselves came to an evil end.

فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ...

158. But the Penalty seized them.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً...

Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٥٨)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٥٩)

159. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C.167 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26: 160-191)

The task of Lut was a hard one: his mission
Was to people addicted to crimes abominable.
His reasoning with them was in vain: it only
Excited their wrath. They threatened to cast
Him out, but were themselves overwhelmed
In disaster. Shu'ayb had to rebuke fraud
And commercial dishonesty; he met only
Ridicule, but the just and fair dealing
He preached was vindicated in the end.

Section 9

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٦٠)

160. The people of Lut rejected the messengers.

C3209. The story of Lut (Lot) will be found in 7:80-84: see n. 1049.

Here the point is that the people of the Cities of the Plain were shamelessly addicted to vice against nature, and Lut's warning only exasperated them, until they were destroyed by a shower of brimstone.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٦١)

161. Behold, their brother Lut said to them:
"Will ye not fear (Allah)?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٦٢)

162. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١٦٣)

163. "So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

164. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٤)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٥)

165. "Of all the creatures in the world, will ye approach males.

وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُم...

166. "And leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your mates?

...بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ (١٦٦)

Nay, ye are a people transgressing (all limits)!"

قَالُوا لَئِن لَّمْ تَنتَهِ يَا لُوطُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ (١٦٧)

167. They said: "If thou desist not, O Lut! thou wilt assuredly be cast out!"

C3210. Their threat to cast him out has a grim significance in what actually happened. They were destroyed where they were, and he was glad to escape the dreadful Punishment according to the warning he had received.

قَالَ إِنِّي لِعَمَلِكُم مِّنَ الْقَالِينَ (١٦٨)

168. He said:

"I do detest your doings."

C3211. He was only among them from a stem sense of duty. The whole atmosphere there was detestable to him, and he was glad to escape when duty no longer demanded his presence there. He prayed for deliverance from such surroundings.

رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦٩)

169. "O my Lord!

deliver me and my family from such things as they do!"

فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٧٠)

170. So We delivered him and his family -- all

إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ (١٧١)

171. Except an old woman who lingered behind.

C3212. This was Lut's wife, who lingered behind and was among those who perished, See n. 1051 to 7:83.

ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (١٧٢)

172. But the rest We destroyed utterly.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّطَرًا...

173. We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone):

C3213. See n. 1052 to 7:84.

...فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (١٧٣)

and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)!

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً...

174. Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٧٤)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٧٥)

175. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

Section 10

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٧٦)

176. The Companions of the Wood rejected the messengers.

C3214. See n. 2000 to 15:78.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ ...

177. Behold, Shuaib said to them:

C3215. For Shu'ayb see n. 1054 to 7:85.

... أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٧٧)

"Will ye not fear (Allah)?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٧٨)

178. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (١٧٩)

179. "So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

180. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٨٠)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ (١٨١)

181. "Give just measure, and cause no loss (to others by fraud).

C3216. They were a commercial people, but they were given to fraud, injustice, and wrongful mischief (by intermeddling with others).

They are asked to fear Allah and follow His ways: it is He Who also created their predecessors among mankind, who never prospered by fraud and violent wrong-doing, but only justice and fair dealing.

وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ (١٨٢)

182. "And weigh with scales true and upright.

وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ...

183. "And withhold not things justly due to men,

...وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (١٨٣)

nor do evil in the land, working mischief.

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِبِلَّةَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٨٤)

184. "And fear Him Who created you and (Who created) the generations before (you).

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ (١٨٥)

185. They said: "Thou art only one of those bewitched!

وَمَا أَنتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا...

186. "Thou art no more than a mortal like us,

...وَإِن نَّظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (١٨٦)

and indeed we think thou art a liar!

C3217. They deny that he is a prophet or that they are doing wrong, or that any former generations behaved differently. They think they are the true exponents of human nature, and that such as he-idealists-are mere madmen.

فَأَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (١٨٧)

187. "Now cause a piece of the sky to fall on us, if thou art truthful!"

C3218. 'If you really claim any real contact with Allah, let us see if you can bring down a piece of the sky to fall on us!'

قَالَ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٨٨)

188. He said: "My Lord knows best what ye do."

C3219. The challenge to bring down a piece of the sky was merely empty bravado, on the part of those who had called him a liar. But Shu'aib does not insult them. He merely says: "Allah is the best judge of your conduct: what more can I say?" And Allah did punish them.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ...

189. But they rejected him.

...فَأَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ...

Then the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom seized them,

C3220. Perhaps a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. If these people were the same as the Midianites, there was also an earthquake.

See 7:91 and n. 1063.

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٨٩)

and that was the Penalty of a Great Day.

C3221. It must have been a terrible day of wholesale destruction-earthquake, volcanic eruption, lava, cinders and ashes and rumbling noises to frighten those whose death was not instantaneous.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً

190. Verily in that is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٩٠)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٩١)

191. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C3222. See above, n. 3193 to 26:121.

C.168 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26: 192-227)

Thus the Truth of Allah must win against folly
And falsehood. The spirit of Inspiration
And Faith brought down the Quran to the mind
Of the Holy Prophet, that he might teach
In noble Arabic speech, and trough it
Reach the world. If obstinate rebels
Do resist the Message, their day in brief:
With humble, gentle kindness it must make

Its way to all, nearest and farthest.
It is not like the vain words of poets false,
Wandering without a goal: it is Truth,
That fills the heart which trusts in Allah.

Section 11

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٩٢)

192. Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds:

C3223. The hostile reception of some of the previous Messengers having been mentioned, the special characteristics of the Qur-an are now referred to, to show

- that it is true, and
- that its rejection by the Makkan Pagans was of a piece with previous experience in the history of man:

vested interests resist Truth, but it conquers.

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ (١٩٣)

193. With it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth --

C3224. Ruh al Amin, the epithet of Gabriel, who came with the inspired Messages to the holy Prophet, is difficult to render in a single epithet in translation.

In n. 3187 to 26:107 I have described some of the various shades of meaning attached to the adjective Amin as applied to a Prophet.

A further signification as attached to the Spirit of Inspiration is that it is the very quintessence of Faith and Truth, unlike the lying spirits which delude men with falsehood.

On the whole, I think "the Spirit of Faith and Truth" will represent the original best here.

عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ (١٩٤)

194. To thy heart and mind that thou mayest admonish

C3225. Qalb (Heart) signifies not only the seat of the affections, but also the seat of the memory and understanding.

The process of inspiration is indicated by the impression of the divine Message on the inspired one's heart, memory, and understanding, from which it was promulgated in human speech to the world.

In this case the human speech was the perspicuous Arabic tongue, which would be plainly intelligible to the audience who would immediately hear it and be through them transmitted to all the world.

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ (١٩٥)

195. In the perspicuous Arabic tongue.

وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٩٦)

196. Without doubt it is (announced) in the mystic Books of former peoples.

C3226. The word **Zubur**, used here, is plural of **Zabar**, which is mentioned in the Quran as the Book revealed to the prophet Da'ud.

It has also been used in the Quran in generic sense of "Book" (54:52).

Here the word refers to the earlier Revelations. (Eds).

أَوَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُمْ آيَةً أَن يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاء بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (١٩٧)

197. Is it not a Sign to them that the learned of the Children of Israel knew it (as true)?

C3227. Many of the Jewish Doctors recognised the holy Prophet's Message as a Message from Allah, e.g., 'Abdullah ibn Salam and Mukhairiq.

The latter was a man of property, which he left for Islam.

(There were also Christian monks and learned men who recognised the Prophet's mission.)

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَى بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ (١٩٨)

198. Had We revealed it to any of the non-Arabs,

فَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٩٩)

199. And had he recited it to them, they would not have believed in it.

C3228. The turn of Arabia having come for receiving Allah's Revelation, as was foretold in previous Revelations, it was inevitable that it should be in the Arab tongue through the mouth of an Arab. Otherwise it would have been unintelligible, and the Arabs could not have received the Faith and become the vehicles for its promulgation as actually happened in history.

كَذَٰلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٢٠٠)

200. Thus have We caused it to enter the hearts of the Sinners.

C3229. "Thus" I think means through the medium of the Arabic language and the Arab people.

The Quran penetrated through their language and their hearts. If the hard- hearted among them did not believe, they will see when the Penalty comes, how grievous a mistake they made. For the Penalty must come; even when they least expected it.

They will be caught saying or thinking, "There is plenty of time; we can get another respite," when already it will have become too late for them to turn over a new leaf.

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ (٢٠١)

201. They will not believe in it until they see the grievous Penalty;

فَيَأْتِيَهُم بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٠٢)

202. But the (Penalty) will come to them of a sudden, while they perceive it not;

فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنظَرُونَ (٢٠٣)

203. Then they will say: "Shall we be respited?"

أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (٢٠٤)

204. Do they then ask for Our Penalty to be hastened on?

C3230. While some sinners out of negligence postpone the day of repentance till it is too late, others more bold actually ask out of bravado that Allah's Punishment should be brought down on them at once, as they do not believe in Allah or His Punishment!

The answer to them is:

It will come soon enough-too soon, they will think, when it comes!

Cf. (22:47) and notes.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِن مَّتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ (٢٠٥)

205. Seest thou? If We do let them enjoy (this life) for a few years,

ثُمَّ جَاءهُم مَّا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ (٢٠٦)

206. Yet there comes to them at length the (Punishment) which they were promised!

مَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يُمَتَّعُونَ (٢٠٧)

207. It will profit them not that they enjoyed (this life)!

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنذِرُونَ (٢٠٨)

208. Never did We destroy a population, but had its warners --

ذِكْرَى وَمَا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٢٠٩)

209. By way of reminder; and We never are unjust.

C3231. Allah will grant much respite to sinners, for He is Most Gracious and Merciful.

But all this respite will profit them nothing if they are merely immersed in the vanities of this world. Again and again, in spite of their rebellion and their rejection, does Allah send warnings and warners before the final Punishment of Justice. For Allah knows human weakness, and He win never be unjust in the least.

وَمَا تَنَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ (٢١٠)

210. No evil ones have brought down this (Revelation):

C3232. When anything extraordinary happens, there are always people desirous of putting the worst construction on it, and saying that it is the work of Satan. So when the Quran came with its Message in wondrous Arabic, its enemies could only account for its power by attributing it to evil spirits!

Such a beneficent message can never suit the purposes of Satan, nor would it be in their power to produce it. In fact Good and Evil are poles asunder, and Evil cannot even hear words of Good, of tender Pity for sinners and Forgiveness for the penitent!

وَمَا يَنبَغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ (٢١١)

211. It would neither suit them, nor would they be able (to produce it).

إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعْزُولُونَ (٢١٢)

212. Indeed they have been removed far from even (a chance of) hearing it.

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ (٢١٣)

213. So call not on any other god with Allah, or thou wilt be among those under the Penalty.

وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (٢١٤)

214. And admonish thy nearest kinsmen,

وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢١٥)

215. And **lower thy wing** to the Believers who follow thee.

C3233. That is, be kind, gentle, and considerate with them, as a high flying bird is when she lowers her wing to her offspring.

Cf. 17:24 and n. 2205, and 15:88 and n. 2011.

فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢١٦)

216. Then if they disobey thee, say: "I am free (of responsibility) for what ye do!"

C3234. "Disobey thee" implied that they did something wrong, for the holy Prophet commanded what was right and forbade what was wrong.

If, then, any of his flock did wrong the responsibility was not his, for he, like a good shepherd, tried to keep them right.

What was he then to do?

He would continue his teaching. But if any of them went so far wrong as to try to injure their own Teacher, Leader, and Guide, there was nothing for him to fear. His trust was only in Allah, and Allah sees and appraises all men's actions at their true worth. (R)

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ (٢١٧)

217. And put thy trust on the Exalted in Might, the Merciful --

الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ (٢١٨)

218. Who seeth thee standing forth (in prayer),

وَتَقَلُّبَكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ (٢١٩)

219. And thy movements among those who prostrate themselves.

C3235. Literally, the standing and prostration are postures in Muslim prayer: the holy Prophet was equally earnest, sincere, and zealous in prayer for himself and for all his people.

The Prophet's behaviour was exemplary in all the turns of fortune, and however foolish men may cavil, his purity and uprightness are fully known to Allah.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٢٢٠)

220. For it is He Who heareth and knoweth all things.

هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَى مَن تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيَاطِينُ (٢٢١)

221. Shall I inform you, (O people!), on whom it is that the evil ones descend?

C3236. To people who maliciously suggested that the holy Prophet was possessed or inspired by evil spirits (26:210 above) the reply had already been made, but it is now declared that that suggestion is itself the work of Evil. Behind such suggestions are lying and wickedness, or at best some half-truths caught up in hearsay and twisted so as to show Allah in an evil light.

تَنَزَّلُ عَلَى كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ (٢٢٢)

222. They descend on every lying, wicked person,

يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ كَاذِبُونَ (٢٢٣)

223. (Into whose ears) they pour hearsay vanities, and most of them are liars.

وَالشُّعَرَاء يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ (٢٢٤

224. And the Poets -- it is those straying in Evil, who follow them:

C3237. The Poets: to he read along with the exceptions mentioned in verse 227 below.

Poetry and other arts are not in themselves evil, but may on the contrary be used in the service of religion and righteousness. But there is a danger that they may be prostituted for base purposes. If they are insincere ("they say what they do not") or are divorced from actual life or its goodness or its serious purpose, they may become instruments of evil or futility.

They then wander about without any set purpose, and seek the depths (valleys) of human folly rather than the heights of divine light.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ (٢٢٥)

225. Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley?

وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٢٢٦)

226. And that they say what they practice not? --

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا...

227. Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of Allah,

C3238. Poetry and the fine arts which are to be commended are those which emanate from minds steeped in Faith, which try to carry out in life the fine sentiments they express in their artistic work, aim at the glory of Allah rather than at self-glorification or the fulsome praise of men with feet of clay, and do not (as in Jihad) attack anything except aggressive evil.

In this sense a perfect artist should be a perfect man. Perfection may not be attainable in this life, but it should be the aim of every man, and especially of one who wishes to become a supreme artist, not only in technique but in spirit and essentials.

Among the commendable poets contemporary with the holy Prophet may be mentioned Hassan and Labid: the latter had the honour of being one of the seven whose poems were selected for "hanging" (the Mu'allaqat) in the Days of Ignorance.

...وَانتَصَرُوا مِن بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوا...

and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked.

...وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنقَلَبٍ يَنقَلِبُونَ (٢٢٧)

And soon will the **unjust** assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take!

C3239. These were the scurrilous rhymesters, who were doomed to come to an evil end.



رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ

My Lord! Inspire and bestow upon me the power and ability that I may be grateful for Your Favours which You have bestowed on me and on my parents,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Naml

النَّمْل

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is cognate in subject to the one preceding it and the two following it. Its chronological place is also in the same group of four, in the middle Makkan period.

Here there is much mystic symbolism. Wonders in the physical world are types of greater wonders in the spiritual world. The Fire, the White Hand, and the Rod, in the story of Moses; the speech of birds, the crowds of Jinns and men pitted against a

humble ant, and the Hoopoe and the Queen of Sheba, in Solomon's story; the defeat of the plot of the nine wicked men in the story of Salih; and the crime of sin with open eyes in the story of Lut-lead up to the lessons of true and false worship and the miracles of Allah's grace and revelation.

Summery- Wonderful in Revelation, like the Fire which Moses saw, which was a glimpse of Allah's Glory, and His Miracles, which searched out those who refused Faith in spite of the light they had received (27:1-14, and C. 169).

Solomon knew the speech of Birds and had hosts of Jinns and men; yet the wise ant had ample defence against them: the Hoopoe who was absent of his muster, was yet serving him: the Queen of Sheba had a kingdom, but it submitted with conviction to the Wisdom of Solomon and the Kingdom of Allah (27:15-44, C.170).

Fools ascribe ill-luck to godliness as in Salih's story, or fall into the lusts with their eyes open, as in Lut's story; but their plots and their rage will be foiled by Allah (27:45-58, and C.171).

Allah's glory and goodness are supreme over all Creation: Unfaith will yield to Faith in the final adjustment of values: so follow Revelation, serve Allah, and trust Him, (27:59-93, and C. 172).

C.169 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(27:1-14)

Revelation shows us a glimpse of the spiritual
World, guides us in life, and gives us
The Hope of eternal Bliss in the Hereafter.
It works a complete transformation in us,
As it did with Moses when he saw
The mystic fire and was given the Signs
With which to reclaim a people lost
In superstition and sin, and proud of sin.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طس...

1. Ta Sin.

C3240. See 3137 to 26:1.

... تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (١)

These are verses of the Qur'án -- a Book that makes (things) clear;

هُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢)

2. A Guide; and Glad Tidings for the Believers --

C3241. Revelation is here presented in three aspects:

1. it explains things, the attributes of Allah, our own position, and the world around;
2. it directs us to right conduct and keeps us from evil; and
3. to those who have Faith and accept its guidance, it gives the good news of forgiveness, purification, and the achievement of salvation. (R).

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ...

3. Those who establish regular prayers and give in regular charity,

... وَهُم بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ (٣)

and also have (full) assurance of the Hereafter.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (٤)

4. As to those who believe not in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds pleasing in their eyes; and so they wander about in distraction.

C3242. Those who reject Allah and follow Evil have a good conceit of themselves. Their deeds are pleasing to no one else.

As they have rejected Allah's guidance, they are allowed to hug their own self-conceit, and given further respite for repentance. But they follow their own whims and wander about in distraction, as they have no standards such as guide the godly.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْأَخْسَرُونَ (٥)

5. Such are they for whom a grievous Penalty is (waiting): and in the Hereafter theirs will be the greatest loss.

C3243. The account will then be made up, and they will be found to be terribly in loss. They will be the worst in loss, for all their self-complacency.

وَإِنَّكَ لَتُلَقَّى الْقُرْآنَ مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ (٦)

6. As to thee, the Qur'án is bestowed upon thee from the presence of One Who is Wise and All-Knowing.

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا...

7. Behold! Moses said to his family: "I perceive a fire;

C3244. Cf. 20:9-24.

Both there and here there is a reference to the dawn of Revelation in the heart of Moses. The points there emphasised will be found in the notes to that passage.

Here the emphasis is on the wonderful nature of the Fire and the wonderful way in which Moses was transformed at the touch of the Light. He was travelling in the Sinai desert with his family. Seeking ordinary light, he came upon a Light which took him to the highest signs of Allah.

No doubt all his inner history had prepared him for his great destiny. It is the inner history that matters, and not the place or position of a man in the eyes of his ordinary fellows.

... سَآتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ...

soon will I bring you from there some information,

... أَوْ آتِيكُم بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ (٧)

or I will bring you a burning brand to light our fuel, that ye may warm yourselves."

فَلَمَّا جَاءهَا نُودِيَ أَن بُورِكَ مَن فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا...

8. But when he came to the (Fire), a voice was heard:

"Blessed are **those** in the Fire and those around:

C3245. Those: in the original the pronoun is in the singular, "man", which is often used with a plural meaning.

The Commentators usually construe it to mean that this was not a physical fire, but it was the glory of the Angels, a reflection of the Glory of Allah. Hence the exclamation at the end of the verse.

... وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨)

and Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

يَا مُوسَى إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٩)

9. "O Moses! verily, I am Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise!...

وَأَلْقِ عَصَاكَ...

10. "Now do thou throw thy rod!"

C3246. Moses was now transported into an entirely new world. What he had taken to be an ordinary fire was a gleam of the heavenly light.

His own rod or staff was no longer the dead piece of wood that had hitherto supported him. It became instinct with life, a life that moved, and had the power of offence and defence in it, as all living Good must have in its fight with Evil.

His own transformation is described in the next note.

... فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ...

But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it had been a snake, he turned back in retreat, and retraced not his steps:

... يَا مُوسَى لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيَّ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (١٠)

"O Moses (it was said),

"fear not: truly, in My presence, those called as messengers have no fear --

C3247. In this great, new, wonderful world, that was opening out to Moses, he had to get his vision adjusted to his new surroundings, as an ordinary man has to adjust his sight before he can see in any very strong light that is new to him.

The staff which had become alive as a snake frightened him: yet it was to be his own instrument of work in his new mission. All fear was to be cast out of his mind, as befitted a man chosen by Allah.

إِلَّا مَن ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١١)

11. "But if any have done wrong and have thereafter substituted good to take the place of **evil**, truly, I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C3248. His slaying the Egyptian (n. 3146 to 26:14), however defensible from certain aspects, was yet something from his past that had to be washed off, and Allah, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, did it out of His abounding Grace.

Nay, more; he was given a pure, Radiant Hand, as a Sign from Allah, as stated in the next verse.

وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاء مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ...

12. "Now put thy hand into thy bosom, and it will come forth white without stain (or harm):

C3249. Cf. 20:22. There the expression is: "Draw thy hand close to thy side." As far as the physical act is concerned, the expressions there and here mean the same thing.

Moses had a loose-fitting robe. If he put his hand within the folds of the robe, it would go to his bosom on the side of his body opposite to that from which his hand came; i.e., if it was his right hand it would go to the left

side of his bosom. The hand comes out white and radiant, without a stain.

Ordinarily if the skin becomes white it is a sign of disease or leprosy. Here it was the opposite. It was a sign of radiance and glory from the higher Light.

... فِي تِسْعِ آيَاتٍ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ...

(these are) among the nine Signs (thou wilt take) to Pharaoh and his people:

C3250. The nine Signs: see n. 1091 to 7:133.

... إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (١٢)

for they are a people rebellious in transgression.

فَلَمَّا جَاءتْهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٣)

13. But when our Signs came to them, that should have opened their eyes, they said:

"This is sorcery manifest!"

C3251. The Signs should have clearly opened the eyes of any persons who honestly examined them and thought about them. Those who rejected them were perverse and were going against their own light and inner conviction. That was the aggravating feature of their sin.

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا...

14. And they rejected those Signs in iniquity and arrogance, though their souls were convinced thereof:

... فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (١٤)

so see what was the end of those who acted corruptly!

C.170 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(27:15-44)

No less were David and Solomon versed
In knowledge and mystic wisdom. Even

Solomon could appreciate the wisdom
Of the humble Ant. He used all his power
And resources in extending the Kingdom
Of Allah. In wonderful ways did he lead
The Queen of Sheba to the Light of Faith
Of Unity, and confirmed her pure
Worship, the worship of the Lord of the Worlds.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا...

15. We gave (in the past) knowledge to David and Solomon:

C3252. Cf. 21:78-82.

"Knowledge" means such knowledge as leads up to the higher things in life, the Wisdom that was shown in their decisions and judgments, and the understanding that enabled them to fulfil their mission in life.

They were both just men and prophets of Allah. The Bible, as we have it, is inconsistent: on the one hand it calls David "a man after God's own heart" (I Samuel, 13:14, and Acts 13:22); and the Christians acclaim Christ as a son of David; but on the other hand, horrible crimes are ascribed to him, which, if he had committed them, would make him a monster of cruelty and injustice.

About Solomon, too, while he is described as a glorious king, there are stories of his lapses into sin and idolatry. The Muslim teaching considers them both to be men of piety and wisdom, and high in spiritual knowledge.

... وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٥)

and they both said:

"Praise be to Allah, Who has favored us above many of His servants who believe!"

C3253. They ascribed, as was proper, their knowledge, wisdom, and power to the only true Source of all good, Allah.

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُودَ...

16. And Solomon was David's heir.

C3254. The point is that Solomon not only inherited his father's kingdom but his spiritual insight and the prophetic office, which do not necessarily go from father to son.

... وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عُلِّمْنَا مَنطِقَ الطَّيْرِ ...

He said: "O ye people! we have been taught the speech of Birds,

C3255. Speech of Birds. The spoken word in human speech is different from the means of communication which birds and animals have between each other. But no man can doubt that they have means of communication with each other, if he only observes the orderly flight of migratory birds or the regulated behaviour of ants, bees, and other creatures who live in communities.

The wisdom of Solomon consisted in understanding these things-in the animal world and in the lower fringes of human intelligence.

... وَأُوتِينَا مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

and on us has been bestowed (a little) of all things:

C3256. "A little of all thing":

Solomon was a king of power and authority; outside his kingdom he had influence among many neighbouring peoples; he had knowledge of birds, and beasts and plants; he was just and wise, and understood men; and above all, he had spiritual insight, which brought him near to Allah.

Thus he had something of all kinds of desirable gifts. And with true gratitude he referred them to Allah, the Giver of all gifts.

... إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ (١٦)

this is indeed Grace manifest (from Allah)."

وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ وَالطَّيْرِ ...

17. And before Solomon were marshalled his hosts -- of Jinns and men and birds,

... فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (١٧)

and they were all kept in order and ranks.

C3257. Besides the literal meaning, there are two symbolical meanings.

1. All his subjects of varying grades of intelligence, taste, and civilization, were kept in due order and cooperation, by his discipline, justice, and good government.
2. The gifts of various kinds, which he possessed (see last note), he used in proper order and coordination, as if they were a well disciplined army, thus getting the best possible results from them.

حَتَّى إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَى وَادِي النَّمْلِ...

18. At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants,

... قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَكُمْ لَا...

one of the ants said: "O ye ants, get into your habitations,

... يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (١٨)

lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it."

C3258. This verse and the next, read together, suggest the symbolical meaning as predominant.

The ant, to outward appearance, is a very small and humble creature. In the great pomp and circumstances of the world, she (generic feminine in Arabic) may be neglected or even trampled on by a people who mean her no harm. Yet, by her wisdom, she carries on her own life within her own sphere ("habitations") unmolested, and makes a useful contribution to the economy of the

world. So there is room for the humblest people in the spiritual world.

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ...

19. So he smiled, amused at her speech; and he said:

رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ

"O my Lord! so order me that I may be grateful for Thy favors, which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents,

C3259. The counterpart to the position of the humble ant is the position of a great king like Solomon.

He prays that his power and wisdom and all other gifts may be used for righteousness and for the benefit of all around him. The ant being in his thoughts, we may suppose that he means particularly in his prayer that he may not even unwittingly tread on humble beings in his preoccupations with the great things of the world.

... وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ ...

and that I may work the righteousness that will please Thee:

C3260. The righteousness which pleases the world is often very different from the righteousness which pleases Allah.

Solomon prays that he may always take Allah's Will as his standard, rather than the standards of men.

... وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٩)

and admit me, by Thy Grace, to the ranks of Thy righteous Servants."

C3261. In the Kingdom of Allah, righteousness is the badge of citizenship.

And although there are great and noble grades (see n. 586 to 4:69), the base of that citizenship is the universal brotherhood of righteousness. The greatest in that Kingdom are glad and proud to pray for that essential badge.

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ...

20. And he took a muster of the Birds; and he said: "Why is it I see not the hoopoe?

... أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ (٢٠)

Or is he among the absentees?

C3262. Solomon was no idle or easy-going king. He kept all his organisation strictly up to the mark, both his armies literally and his forces (metaphorically). His most mobile arm was the Birds, who were light on the wing and flew and saw everything like efficient scouts. One day he missed the Hoopoe in his muster.

The Hoopoe is a light, graceful creature, with elegant plumage of many colours, and a beautiful yellow crest on his head, which entities him to be called a royal bird.

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْبَحَنَّهُ...

21. "I will certainly punish him with a severe Penalty, or execute him,

...أَوْ لَيَأْتِيَنِّي بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢١)

unless he bring me a clear reason (for absence)."

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ...

22. But the hoopoe tarried not far:

he (came up and) said: "I have compassed (territory) which thou hast not compassed,

...وَجِئْتُكَ مِن سَبَإٍ بِنَبَإٍ يَقِينٍ (٢٢)

and I have come to thee from Saba with tidings true.

C3263. Saba may reasonably be identified with the Biblical Sheba (I Kings 10:1-10).

It is further referred to in the Surah called after its name: 34:15-20.

It was a city in Yemen, said to have been three days' journey (say 50 miles) from the city of San'a. A recent German explorer, Dr. Hans Helfritz, claims to have located it in what is now Hadhramaut territory. The famous dam of Maarib made the country very prosperous, and enabled it to attain a high degree of civilization ("provided with every requisite" in the next verse).

The Queen of Sheba therefore rightly held up her head high until she beheld the glories of Solomon.

إِنِّي وَجَدتُّ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ...

23. "I found (there) a woman ruling over them

C3264. The Queen of Sheba (by name Bilqis in Arabian tradition) came apparently from Yemen, but she had affinities with Abyssinia and possibly ruled over Abyssinia also.

The Habasha tribe (after whom Abyssinia was named) came from Yemen. Between the southern coast of Yemen and the north-eastern coast of Abyssinia there are only the Straits of Bab-al-Mandab, barely twenty miles across.

In the 10th or 11th century B.C. there were frequent invasions of Abyssinia from Arabia, and Solomon's reign of 40 years is usually synchronised with B.C. 992 to 952. The Sabaean and Himyarite alphabets in which we find the south Arabian pre-Islamic inscriptions, passed into Ethiopic, the language of Abyssinia.

The Abyssinians possess a traditional history called "The Book of the Glory of Kings" (Kebra Nagast), which has been translated from Ethiopic into English by Sir E.A. Wallis Budge (Oxford, 1932). It gives an account of the Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek 1, as founders of the Abyssinian dynasty. (R).

وَأُوتِيَتْ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ...

and provided with every requisite;

C3265. Provided with every requisite:

I take this to refer not only to the abundance of spices and gems and gold in her country, but to sciences and arts, and perhaps the spiritual possibilities which made her accept the religion of Unity and Truth (27:44).

... وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢٣)

and she has a magnificent throne.

...وَجَدتُّهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ

24. "I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah:

C3266. The ancient religion of the people of Saba (the Himyar or Sabaeans) consisted in the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, the planets, and the stars. Possibly the cult was connected with that of Chaldaea, the home-land of Abraham: see 6:75-79 and notes thereon.

Yemen had easy access to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf by way of the sea, as well as with Abyssinia. That accounts for the Christians of Najran and the Jewish dynasty of kings (e.g. Zu-Nuwas, d. 525 A.D.) who persecuted them in the century before Islam,-also for the Christian Abyssinian Governor Abraha and his discomfiture in the year of the Prophet's birth (Surah 105), say 570 A.D. Jewish-Christian influences were powerful in Arabia in the sixth century of the Christian era.

The religion of these Sabaeans (written in Arabic with a Sin) should not be confounded with that of the Sabians (with a *Sad*), as to whom see n. 76 to 2:62.

...وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ ...

Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path --

... فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ (٢٤)

so they receive no guidance -

أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

25. "(Kept them away from the Path), that they should not worship Allah, Who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth,

C3267. The false worship of the Sabaeans is here exposed in three ways:

1. that they were self-satisfied with their own human achievements, instead of looking up to Allah;
2. and that the light of the heavenly bodies which they worshipped was only dependent on the true Light of Allah, which extends over heaven and earth; the Creator should be worshipped rather than His Creation;
3. and Allah knows the hidden secrets of men's minds as well as the objects which they openly profess: are false worshippers really only worshipping their own selves, or the "sins they have a mind to" and are therefore afraid to go to Allah, Who knows all?

وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ (٢٥)...

and knows what ye hide and what ye reveal.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٦)

26. "Allah! -- there is no god but He! -- Lord of the Throne Supreme!"

C3268. The messenger (Hoopoe) is a pious bird, as befits a messenger of Solomon. After mentioning the false worship of the Sabaeans, he pronounces the Creed of Unity, and emphasises Allah's attribute as Lord of the Great Throne, in order to make it clear that whatever may be the magnificence of a human throne such as he has described (in verse 23), he is not in any way misled from his loyalty to Solomon, the exponent of the true Religion of Liberty.

قَالَ سَنَنظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٢٧)

27. (Solomon) said:

"Soon shall we see whether thou hast told the truth or lied!

C3269. Solomon does not doubt his messenger's plea that he has scouted a new country, but wants to test whether he has loosened the rein of his imagination in describing its splendours or its worship.

اذْهَب بِّكِتَابِي هَذَا فَأَلْقِهْ إِلَيْهِمْ...

28. "Go thou, with this letter of mine, and deliver it to them:

...ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ...

then draw back from them,

...فَانظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٢٨)

and (wait to) see what answer they return"...

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا المَلَأُ إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ (٢٩)

29. (The Queen) said: "Ye chiefs! here is -- delivered to me -- a letter worthy of respect.

... إِنَّهُ مِن سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ

30. "It is from Solomon, and is (as follows):

... بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٣٠)

'In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful:

C3270. Solomon expressly begins his letter with the formula of the true and universal Religion of Unity, and he invites to the true Faith the new people with whom he establishes honourable relations, not for worldly conquest but for the spreading of the Light of Allah.

أَلَّا تَعْلُوا عَلَيَّ وَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ (٣١)

31. "'Be ye not arrogant against me but come to me in submission to the true Religion.'"

Section 3

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا المَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي...

32. She said:

"Ye chiefs! advise me in (this) my affair:

...مَا كُنتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ (٣٢)

no affair have I decided except in your presence."

...قَالُوا نَحْنُ أُولُوا قُوَّةٍ وَأُولُوا بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ

33. They said: "We are endued with strength, and given to vehement war:

...وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ فَانظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ (٣٣)

but the command is with thee; so consider what thou wilt command."

...قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً

34. She said: "Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest:

C3271. The character of Queen Bilqis, as disclosed here, is that of a ruler enjoying great wealth and dignity, and the full confidence of her subjects. She does nothing without consulting her Council, and her Council are ready to carry out her commands in all things. Her people are manly, loyal, and contented, and ready to take the field against any enemy of their country.

But their queen is prudent in policy, and is not willing to embroil her country in war. She has the discrimination to see that Solomon is not like ordinary kings who conquer by violence. Perhaps in her heart she has a ray of the divine light already, though her people are yet Pagans. She wishes to carry her people with her in whatever she does, because she is as loyal to them as they are to her. An exchange of presents would probably establish better relations between the two kingdoms. And perhaps she anticipates some spiritual understanding also, a hope which was afterwards realised.

In Bilqis we have a picture of womanhood, gentle, prudent, and able to tame the wider passions of her subjects. (R).

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٤)

thus do they behave.

وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِم بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنَاظِرَةٌ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٣٥)

35. "But I am going to send him a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors."

فَلَمَّا جَاء سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَنِ بِمَالٍ...

36. How when (the embassy) came to Solomon, he said:
"Will ye give me abundance in wealth?

...فَمَا آتَانِيَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا آتَاكُم...

But that which Allah has given me is better than that which He has given you!

...بَلْ أَنتُم بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ (٣٦)

Nay it is ye who rejoice in your gift!

C3272. Poor Bilqis! she thought she had arranged with womanly tact to conciliate Solomon, and at the same time pacify her warlike subjects! But the effect of the embassy with presents was the very opposite.

Solomon took it as an insult that she should send her presents instead of her submission to the true Religion! He flung back the presents at her, as much as to say,

> "Let these baubles delight your own hearts! Allah has blessed me with plenty of worldly goods, and something infinitely better, viz.; His Light and Guidance! Why do you say nothing about that?"
>
> Will you only understand the argument of armies and violence?"

Or perhaps his speech was only meant for the Sabaean crowd. For when she accurately came, he treated her kindly, and she accepted the religion of Unity.

ارْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُم بِهَا...

37. "Go back to them, and be sure we shall come to them with such hosts as they will never be able to meet:

...وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُم مِّنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (٣٧)

we shall expel them from there in disgrace, and they will feel humbled (indeed)."

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ...

38. He said (to his own men): "Ye Chiefs!

...أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَن يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ (٣٨)

which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"

C3273. The throne is symbolical of power and dignity. So far her throne was based on material wealth: Solomon is going to alter it to a basis of Faith and the Religion of Unity.

قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ ...

39. Said an Ifrit, of the Jinns:

C3274. Ifrit: a large, powerful jinn, reputed to be wicked and crafty; hence he is anxious to be recognised as one that "could be trusted".

... أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَن تَقُومَ مِن مَّقَامِكَ...

"I will bring it to thee before thou rise from thy Council:

...وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ (٣٩)

indeed I have full strength for the purpose, and may be trusted."

قَالَ الَّذِي عِندَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ...

40. Said one who had knowledge of the Book:

C3275. The symbolic meaning still continues.

The big 'Ifrit had boasted of his brute strength, and his reliability. But this is not enough to transform a power (throne) based on materialism into one based on inward knowledge, knowledge of the heart and spirit, the sort of knowledge that comes from the Book of the Grace of Allah, the spirit of truth and benevolence which is the invisible magic of Prophets of Allah.

Even if worldly power and common honesty may be able to effect some good, it will take a comparatively long time, while the magic of spiritual love acts instantaneously.

Solomon was thankful to Allah that he had men endowed with such power, and he had the throne of Bilqis transported to his Court and transformed as he desired, without Bilqis even knowing it. (R).

...أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَن يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ...

"I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!"

فَلَمَّا رَآهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِندَهُ قَالَ...

Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said:

...هَذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي أَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ...

"This is by the grace of my Lord! -- to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful!

C3276. If Solomon had been ungrateful to Allah, i.e., if he had worked for his own selfish or worldly ends, he could have used the brute strength of 'Ifrit to add to his worldly strength and glory.

Instead of it he uses the higher magic of the Book,-Of the Spirit-to transform the throne of Bilqis for her highest good, which means also the highest good of her subjects, by the divine Light.

He had the two alternatives, and he chooses the better, and he thus shows his gratitude to Allah for the Grace He had given him.

...وَمَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ...

And if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul;

...وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ (٤٠)

but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of All Needs, Supreme in Honor!"

C3277. Man's gratitude to Allah is not a thing that benefits Allah, for Allah is high above all needs: it benefits a man's own soul and gives him higher rank in the life to come.

Per contra, man's ingratitude will not detract from Allah's Glory and Honour or the value of Allah's generous gifts to man: for Allah is supreme

- in honour,
- glory, and
- generosity.

Karim in Arabic involves all three significations.

قَالَ نَكِّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا...

41. He said: "Transform her throne out of all recognition by her:

...نَنظُرْ أَتَهْتَدِي أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ (٤١)

let us see whether she is guided (to the truth) or is one of those who receive no guidance."

C3278. The throne having been transformed, it will be a test to see whether Bilqis recognises it as her own and accepts it of her own free will as her own, or rejects it as something alien to her, something she will not accommodate herself to.

So in our life.

We get used to certain habits and customs and certain ways of thought. Allah's message comes to transform us and set us on a different kind of throne, with our own active and willing consent. If we are wise, we feel honoured and grateful. If we are "obstinately rebellious", we reject it as not our own, and pine for the old slavery, as the Israelites pined for Egypt when they were under Allah's guidance in the wilderness.

فَلَمَّا جَاءتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكِ...

42. So when she arrived, she was asked, "Is this thy throne?"

...قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ...

She said, "It was just like this;

C3279. Bilqis stands the test. She knows it was her throne, yet not exactly the same, for it was now much better.

And she is proud of her good fortune, and acknowledges, for herself and her people, with gratitude, the light which was given to them by Allah, by which they recognised Allah's prophet in Solomon, and received the true Religion with all their will and heart and soul.

...وَأُوتِينَا الْعِلْمَ مِن قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ (٤٢)

and knowledge was bestowed on us in advance of this, and we have submitted to Allah (in Islam)."

...وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَت تَّعْبُدُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ

43. And he diverted her from the worship of others besides Allah:

C3280. Some Commentators and Translators adopt an alternative construction for the last clause of the last verse and the first clause of this verse.

They understand the former to be spoken by Solomon and to mean,

> 'we had knowledge of Allah's Message and accepted it before her.'

They understand the latter to mean,

> 'the worship of others besides Allah diverted her (from the true Religion).'

If we accept the construction adopted in this Translation, the visit to Solomon confirmed the true Faith of Bilqis and prevented her from lapsing into her ancestral false worship.

...إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِن قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ (٤٣)

for she was (sprung) of a people that had no faith.

...قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ

44. She was asked to enter that lofty Palace:

C3281. Bilqis, having been received with honour on her arrival, and having accepted the transformation of her

throne, placed presumably in an outer building of the Palace, is asked to enter the great Palace itself.

Its floor was made of slabs of smooth polished glass, that glistened like water. She thought it was water, and tucked up her clothes to pass through it, showing her bare feet and ankles. This was a very undignified position for a woman, especially one of the position of a Queen.

Solomon immediately told her the real facts, when she felt grateful, and joined herself with Solomon in praising Allah.

...فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَن سَاقَيْهَا...

but when she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she (tucked up her skirts), uncovering her legs.

... ... قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ مِّن قَوَارِيرَ...

He said: "This is but a palace paved smooth with slabs of glass."

...قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ...

She said: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul:

C3282. In symbolic language, a new entrant into the Palace of divine knowledge, may yet carry in his mind many of the illusions of the lower world, the transparent crystal of Truth he may yet mistake for the unstable water of worldly vanity, which soils the vestments of those who paddle in it. This leads to many undignified positions and mistakes.

But a gentle leader points out the truth.

Instead of resenting it, the new entrant is grateful; acknowledges his own mistake freely and frankly; and heartily joins with the Teacher in the worship of Allah, the Source of all truth and knowledge.

... وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٤)

I do (now) submit (in Islam), with Solomon, to the Lord of the Worlds."

C.171 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(27:45-58)

In Salih's pure preaching the evil Thamud
Found omens of ill to themselves; in secret
They plotted to take his life, and like cowards
They made a league to cover their crime
While lies. Lo! on themselves recoiled
The plot; they perished in utter ruin.
The men admonished the nature given
Them by Allah, and mocked the Message of Purity.
Lo! they were buried in a shower of brimstone!

Section 4

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ...

45. We sent (aforetime), to the Thamud, their brother Salih, saying, "Serve Allah":

C3283. The main story of the Thamud, who were broken up into two factions, the rich oppressing the poor and keeping them out of the good things of life and the test case of the She-camel, will be found in 26:141-159 and the notes thereon.

The point here is the secret plot of the nine men against the Prophet of Allah, whose teaching, they thought, brought them ill-luck; but what they called ill-luck was the just punishment from Allah for their own ill-deeds.

Their plot was foiled, and the whole community, which was involved in evil, was destroyed. (R).

فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَانِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٤٥)...

but behold, they became two factions quarrelling with each other.

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ...

46. He said:

"O my people! why ask ye to hasten on the evil in preference to the good?

C3284. Cf. 13:6.

The evil-doers were really hastening on their own punishment by their feuds against the poor. The advocates of justice were not bringing ill-luck to them. They were showing the way to ward it off. Their own injustice was bringing on their disaster.

...لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٤٦)

If only ye ask Allah for forgiveness, ye may hope to receive mercy."

قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَن مَّعَكَ...

47. They said: "Ill omen do we augur from thee and those that are with thee."

...قَالَ طَائِرُكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ... ...

He said: "Your ill omen is with Allah;

...بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ (٤٧)

yea, ye are a people under trial."

C3285. All evil unpunished is not evil condoned, but evil given a chance for reform. They are on trial, by the mercy of Allah. What they call "ill omen" is really the just punishment for their ill-deeds, and that punishment rests with Allah.

وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ ...

48. There were in the City nine men of a family

...يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ (٤٨)

who made mischief in the land, and would not reform.

C3286. They had made up their minds to wage a relentless war against justice. They did not destroy justice, but justice destroyed them.

قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ...

49. They said:

"Swear a mutual oath by Allah that we shall make a secret night attack on him and his people,

C3287. A most dastardly plot, because

- it was to be secret,
- by night,
- taking their victims unawares,
- and because careful provision was made that they should all tell lies together, saying that they knew nothing about it, in order to evade the vengeance which Salih's heirs (if any were left) or his tribe might want to exact!

And yet such were exactly the plots laid against the holy Prophet himself.

...ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ...

and that we shall then say to his heir (when he seeks vengeance): 'We were not present at the slaughter of his people,

...وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ (٤٩)...

and we are positively telling the truth.'"

وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا وَمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٥٠)

50. They plotted and planned, but We too planned, even while they perceived it not.

C3288. Cf. 3:54.

Their secret plotting is all known to Allah, but of Allah's just and beneficent plans they know nothing. And the wicked must come to an evil end.

فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ...

51. Then see what was the end of their plot! --

...أَنَّا دَمَّرْنَاهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٥١)...

this, that we destroyed them and their people, all (of them).

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوا...

52. Now such were their houses -- in utter ruin -- because they practiced wrongdoing

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٢)

Verily in this is a Sign for people of knowledge.

وَأَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ (٥٣)

53. And We saved those who believed and practiced righteousness.

وَلُوطًا ...

54. We also sent Lut (as a messenger):

C3289. The story of Lut is referred to elsewhere. The passages to which reference may be made here are: 26:160-175, and 7:80-84.

But the point emphasised here is that the crime of the Cities of the Plain was against their own nature, and they saw its enormity, and yet they indulged in it. Can degradation go further?

His wife was not apparently a Believer. Her previous sympathy with the sinful people "destined her" (verse 57 below) to a miserable end, as she lagged behind and shared in the destruction of her kinsfolk.

... إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَأَنتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ (٥٤)

behold, he said to his people, "Do ye do what is shameful though ye see (its iniquity)?

أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّن دُونِ النِّسَاءِ...

55. "Would ye really approach men in your lusts rather than women?

...بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ (٥٥)

Nay, ye are a people (grossly) ignorant!"

C3290. The ignorance referred to here is the spiritual Ignorance, the Ignorance of how grossness and sins that

bring shame on their own physical and moral nature are doomed to destroy them: it is their own loss.

That they knew the iniquity of their sins has already been stated in the last verse. That knowledge makes their spiritual Ignorance all the more culpable, just as a man consciously deceiving people by half-truths is a greater liar than a man who tells lies inadvertently.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا...

56. But his people gave no other answer but this: they said,

...أَخْرِجُوا آلَ لُوطٍ مِّن قَرْيَتِكُمْ...

"Drive out the followers of Lut from your city:

...إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ (٥٦)...

these are indeed men who want to be clean and pure!"

C3291. Cf. 7:82-84.

Instead of being ashamed on account of the consciousness of their own guilt, they attack the pure ones with their sarcasms, as if not they but the pure ones were in the wrong in trying to set them on the right way.

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَّرْنَاهَا مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ (٥٧)

57. But We saved him and his family, except his wife:

her We destined to be of those who lagged behind.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّطَرًا...

58. And We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone):

...فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (٥٨)...

and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)!

C.172 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(27:59-93)

Allah's goodness and mercy are manifest
Through all nature and in the heart and conscience
Of man. He alone knows all: our knowledge
Can at best be partial. Yet we can travel
Through space and time and see how Evil
Never proposed. Allah teaches us good,
But how can we see if we make ourselves blind?
At the end of all things shall we know how small
Is our state, but for Allah's Grace: let us bow
To His Will and accept His true guidance:
Let us praise Him and trust Him-now and forever!

Section 5

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى...

59. Say:

Praise be to Allah, and Peace on His servants whom He has chosen (for his Message).

C3292. Allah's revelation having been described as Light, Guidance, and Mercy, we ought all to be grateful to Allah for vouchsafing His revelation.

We ought also to appreciate the services of Allah's Messengers, who are chosen to deliver Ms Message: we ought to send salutations of Peace on them, instead of plotting, as the wicked do, for their removal or persecution, or banishment or death. For these Prophets of Allah undergo every kind of hardship and forego every kind of advantage or pleasure in life for serving mankind.

And Allah is truth and goodness, and all our fancies of false worship are falsehoods and evils. Shall we prefer falsehood and evil to truth and goodness? (R).

...آللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٥٩)

(Who) is better? -- Allah or the false gods they associate with Him?

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ...

60. Or, who has created the heaven and the earth,

C3293. The order, beauty, and grandeur of the Universe are appealed to. They show unity of design and purpose.

How can unjust, ignorant, foolish, heedless, false men think of a multiplicity of gods, or of any god, besides the One True God?

...وَأَنزَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاء...

and who sends you down rain from the sky?

...فَأَنبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ...

Yea, with it We cause to grow well-planted orchards full of beauty and delight:

...مَّا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَن تُنبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا...

it is not in your power to cause the growth of the trees in them.

C3294. To make a single seed germinate and grow into a tree is beyond man's power. When it comes to a great well-laid-out garden of beauty and delight, no one would think it grew up of itself without a Gardener's consummate art.

And the orchard is more than the trees in it: there is design and beauty in their arrangement: proper spaces have to be left between them for the growth of their roots, for the aeration of the soil beneath them, and for the penetration of air and sunlight between their branches.

How can any one then think of the wonderful Universe as a whole, without thinking of the far higher Unity of Design, the evidence of the One True Allah? (R).

...أَإِلَهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

...بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ (٦٠)

Nay, they are a people who swerve from justice.

أَمَّن جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا...

61. Or, who has made the earth firm to live in;

...وَجَعَلَ خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ ...

made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable;

C3295. Cf. 16:15 and notes 2038 and 2039.

The *terra firma*, the flowing water, and the cycle of water circulation-sea, vapour, clouds, rain, rivers, and sea again,-all one and yet all distinct, with a sort of wonderful barrier between salt water and fresh water: can man see all this and yet be ignorant of Allah?

... وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا...

and made a separating bar between the two bodies of flowing water?

C3296. Cf. 25:53 and n. 3111 and n. 3112.

...أَإِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٦١)

Nay, most of them know not.

أَمَّن يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ...

62. Or, who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him,

...وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ ...

and who relieves its suffering,

C3297. Besides the evidence of external nature, there is the still more intimate evidence in man's inner conscience and heart.

Allah listens to man's cry of agony and **relieves his suffering**, and He has given him superiority over other

creation on this earth, through his mind and soul. Is man then going to run after inferior beings and forget Allah?

... وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ...

and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth?

C3298. Cf. 6:165, n. 988.

...أَإِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

...قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٦٢)

Little it is that ye heed!

أَمَّن يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ...

63. Or, who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea,

...وَمَن يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ...

and who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy?

C3299. Cf. 25:48, n. 3104.

After external nature, our attention was drawn to our inner consciousness; after that, it is drawn here to our social and collective life, in which we use the forces of nature for international intercourse, trade, agriculture, production, and economic well-being generally.

In the next verse, we are asked to contemplate creation from its primeval stages, through its intermediate processes, to the final Destiny in a new Creation-a new heaven and a new earth.

...أَإِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah? --

...تَعَالَىٰ اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٣)

high is Allah above what they associate with Him!

أَمَّن يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ...

64. Or, who originates Creation, then repeats it,

C3300. Cf. 10:34, and n. 1428.

...وَمَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

and who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth?

C3301. Sustenance: of course in the spiritual as well as the material sense.

...أَإِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ ...

(Can there be another) god besides Allah?

...قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٦٤)

Say, "Bring forth your argument, if ye are telling the truth!"

C3302. All the arguments point to the Unity of Allah: there is none whatever against it.

قُل لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ...

65. Say: None in the heavens or on earth, except Allah, knows what is hidden:

C3303. The existence of Allah is certain. But nothing else can be known with certainty to our knowledge. He has told us of the Hereafter, and therefore we know it is true.

But those who do not believe in Allah,-what knowledge or certainty can they have?

Even when it is actually coming, they will not have the sense to perceive it.

...وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ (٦٥)

nor can they perceive when they shall be raised up (for Judgment).

بَلِ ادَّارَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ...

66. Still less can their knowledge comprehend the Hereafter:

...بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا...

nay, they are in doubt and uncertainty thereanent;

...بَلْ هُم مِّنْهَا عَمُونَ (٦٦)

nay, they are blind thereunto!

C3304. The Unbelievers are generally materialists, who cannot go beyond the evidence of their physical senses. As to a spiritual vision of the future, their physical senses would only leave them in doubt and uncertainty, while their rejection of the spiritual light makes them blind altogether to the next world.

Section 6

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَئِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَآبَاؤُنَا أَئِنَّا لَمُخْرَجُونَ (٦٧)

67. The Unbelievers say:

"What! when we become dust, -- we and our fathers -- shall we really be raised (from the dead)?

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هَذَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا مِن قَبْلُ...

68. "It is true we were promised this -- we and our fathers before (us):

...إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٦٨)

these are nothing but tales of the ancients."

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٦٩)

69. Say: "Go ye through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty (of sin)."

C3305. Even if the Unbelievers are unwilling to take any doctrine, they have only to observe what has actually happened on the earth, and they will see that evil always came to an evil end, and that Truth and righteousness ultimately won.

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُن فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ (٧٠)

70. But grieve not over them, nor distress thyself because of their plots.

C3306. Cf. 16:127, and n. 2164.

'The righteous need not worry over the unjust. The plots of the unjust can never defeat or deflect the purpose of Allah.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٧١)

71. They also say: "When will this promise (come to pass)? (Say) if ye are truthful."

قُلْ عَسَى أَن يَكُونَ رَدِفَ لَكُم بَعْضُ الَّذِي تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (٧٢)

72. Say: "It may be that some of the events which ye wish to hasten on may be (close) in your pursuit!"

C3307. The Unbelievers -or even men of half-hearted faith- may say, "Why worry over distant future events? Take the day as it comes!"

But that is a fallacy. Judgment is certain, and it may be that this very hour may be the hour of doom for any given individual.

This is the hour of repentance and amendment. For Allah wishes well to all mankind in spite of their ingratitude.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٧٣)

73. But verily thy Lord is full of grace to mankind: yet most of them are ungrateful.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٧٤)

74. And verily thy Lord knoweth all that their hearts do hide, as well as all that they reveal.

وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٧٥)

75. Nor is there aught of the Unseen, in heaven or earth, but is (recorded) in a clear record.

C3308. Cf. 22:70, 36:12, 57:22. [Eds].

إِنَّ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَقُصُّ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٧٦)

76. Verily this Qur'án doth explain to the Children of Israel most of the matters in which they disagree.

C3309. The Jews had numerous sects. Some were altogether out of the pale, e.g., the Samaritans, who had a separate Tawrah of their own: they hated the other Jews and were hated by them. But even in the orthodox body, there were several sects, of which the following may be mentioned:

1. the Pharisees, who were literalists, formalists, and fatalists, and had a large body of traditional literature, with which they overlaid the Law of Moses;
2. the Sadducees, who were rationalists, and seemed to have doubted the doctrine of the Resurrection or of a Hereafter;
3. the Essenes, who practised a sort of Communism and Asceticism and prohibited marriage.

About many of their doctrines they had bitter disputes, which were settled by the Quran, which supplemented and perfected the Law of Moses. It also explained clearly the attributes of Allah and the nature of Revelation, and the doctrine of the Hereafter.

وَإِنَّهُ لَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٧٧)

77. And it certainly is a Guide and Mercy to those who believe.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُم بِحُكْمِهِ...

78. Verily thy Lord will decide between them by His Decree:

C3310. Decree: hukm: the disputes between rival sects can only be settled by the Decree of Allah,

- in the form of a Revelation, as was done by the Quran, or
- by the logic of events, for hundreds of sects have been extinguished and forgotten in the course of time, and
- in the Decree of Judgment in the Hereafter, when all jarring sects will at length see their errors.

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ (٧٨)

and He is Exalted in Might, All-Knowing.

...فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

79. So put thy trust in Allah:

...إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ (٧٩)

for thou art on (the Path of) manifest Truth.

إِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ (٨٠)

80. Truly thou canst not cause the Dead to listen, nor canst thou cause the Deaf to hear the call, (especially) when they turn back in retreat.

C3311. The Prophet's responsibility was to preach and show the way. Men and women of goodwill had faith and accepted the Message. But he was not responsible for the obstinacy and perversity of men who turned away from Allah's Signs and rejected the Truth.

وَمَا أَنتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمْيِ عَن ضَلَالَتِهِمْ...

81. Nor canst thou be a guide to the Blind, (to prevent them) from straying;

...إِن تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (٨١)

only those wilt thou get to listen who believe in Our Signs, and they will bow in Islam.

... وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ

82. And when the Word is fulfilled against them (the unjust),

C3312. The Word. the Decree or Sentence, the Decision to end the respite and restore the true values of right and wrong in a new world: their cup of iniquity will then have been full.

... أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ...

We shall produce from the earth a beast to (face) them:

C3313. The **Beast** will be one of the Signs of the Last Days to come, before the present World passes away and the new World is brought into being.

In symbolic language it would represent gross Materialism. It will be the embodiment of fat worldly triumph, which will appeal to a misguided and degenerate world, because such a corrupt world will have no assured belief in the Signs of Allah or in spiritual Light. It will itself he a Sign or Portent, closing the door or repentance. I do not know whether this Beast has any reference to the symbolism in chapter xii of the Book of Revelation, which closes the New Testament.

...تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ (٨٢)

he will speak to them, for that mankind did not believe with assurance in our Signs.

If taklimuhum is read instead of **tukallimuhum**, it would mean that the Beast would wound them, symbolically, that Materialism would produce its own Nemesis.

Section 7

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّن يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (٨٣)

83. One Day We shall gather together from every people a troop of those who reject Our Signs, and they shall be kept in ranks --

...حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوا قَالَ أَكَذَّبْتُم بِآيَاتِي

84. Until, when they come (before the Judgment-Seat), Allah will say: "Did ye reject My Signs,

...وَلَمْ تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا ...

though ye comprehended them not in knowledge,

C3314. The charge against them will be:

'You had no knowledge, and yet you arrogantly rejected My Signs: is that true, or have you any plea in your defence?'

... أَمَّاذَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٨٤)

or what was it ye did?"

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِم بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا يَنطِقُونَ (٨٥)

85. And the Word will be fulfilled against them, because of their wrongdoing, and they will be unable to speak (in plea).

C3315. There will be no plea, because the charge will be only too true.

The Decree will be passed and executed.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِيَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا...

86. See they not that We have made the Night for them to rest in and the Day to give them light?

C3316. Night, Day, Rest, and Light. both in the literal and the symbolic sense.

- Any one with a scrap of faith or spiritual insight could see that the Night is blessing when used for rest and a curse when used to cover ignorance or sin;
- and that the Day is for work and enlightenment, and its misuse is gross ingratitude to Allah.

  Or, understand Truth and practise Righteousness while it is yet Light and the Message of Allah is here to guide you:

  for there comes the Night when Endeavour will cease and there will be no room for Repentance.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٦)

Verily in this are Signs for any people that believe!

...وَيَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي

الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاءَ اللَّهُ...

87. And the Day that the Trumpet will be sounded -

then will be smitten with terror those who are in the heavens, and those who are on earth, except such as Allah will please (to exempt):

...وَكُلٌّ أَتَوْهُ دَاخِرِينَ (٨٧)

and all shall come to His (Presence) as beings conscious of their lowliness.

C3317. Arrogance will flee with Ignorance, and Self will sec itself in its true place-that of humility and lowliness-when the scales of ignorance fall from its eyes.

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ...

88. Thou seest the mountains and thinkest them firmly fixed: but they shall pass away as the clouds pass away:

C3318. This is so in the present phase of phenomenal things, both literally and figuratively.

There seems nothing more firm or fixed or permanent than the "eternal hills": yet when the new order of things comes and the new World is brought into being, they will be as flimsy and unsubstantial as clouds.

So, in the revaluation of things in the Hereafter persons or things or ideas that seem so great and so firmly established now will pass away like mere fancies and give way to the Reality of Allah.

...صُنْعَ اللَّهِ الَّذِي أَتْقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ...

(such is) the artistry of Allah, Who disposes of all things in perfect order:

C3319. Atqana: to arrange or dispose of things with art, or so as to obtain the most perfect results.

The present phenomenal world and the Future that is to be, all have a definite object and purpose in the Plan of Allah, Who knows perfectly what we are, what we do, what we think, and what we need. Who can praise His artistry enough?

...إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٨٨)

for He is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

مَن جَاء بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا...

89. If any do good, good will (accrue) to them therefrom;

...وَهُم مِّن فَزَعٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ (٨٩)

and they will be secure from terror that Day.

وَمَن جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ...

90. And if any do evil, their faces will be thrown headlong into the Fire:

C3320. Headlong: it may be that the very things of which we were proudest, which we considered foremost in our present order of the world, will be the first to go into the Fire, as they are but the window-dressing (faces) of Evil.

...هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٠)

"Do ye receive a reward other than that which ye have earned by your deeds?"

C3321. There will be no punishment except such as has been deserved by actual conduct in the present life of probation.

إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلْدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ...

91. For me, I have been commanded to serve the Lord of this City, Him Who has sanctified it and to Whom (belong) all things:

C3322. The Lord of this City. This was spoken in Makkah say about the 5th year before the Hijrah, when the holy Prophet and his adherents were being persecuted as enemies to the cult of Makkah.

So far from being against the true spirit of the holy City of Makkah, it was actually in furtherance of that spirit, which had been overlaid by the idolatries and abominations of the Pagan Quraish.

They are told that the new Teaching is from the Lord of Makkah itself, the One True God, Who had sanctified it in the time of Abraham. Lest they should think that it was a local or tribal or narrow cult, it is added that He is not only Lord of this City, but Lord of the Worlds, "to Whom belong all things".

It is a universal message; but how sad it would be if the Makkans, among whom it came first, were to reject it?

...وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٩١)

and I am commanded to be of those who bow in Islam to Allah's Will --

...وَأَنْ أَتْلُوَ الْقُرْآنَ

92. And to rehearse the Qur'án:

C3323. The duty of the Prophet and his adherents was,

- first, to accept Islam and become themselves shining examples of Allah's grace and mercy, as they in fact were, and
- secondly to preach that message and spread that Light to all around.

It was not for them to force it on unwilling people: for any who rejected it would find their own spiritual loss in such rejection. But they must clearly warn them of the consequences.

...فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ...

and if any accept guidance, they do it for the good of their own souls,

...وَمَن ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ (٩٢)

and if any stray, say: "I am only a Warner."

...وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا

93. And say: "Praise be to Allah, Who will soon show you His Signs, so that ye shall know them;"

C3324. In a few years after that, many wonderful things happened that removed the doubts of the doubters and confirmed the faith of the Believers. They showed how the logic of events proved the true mission of the holy Prophet. Other things some minds may not be able to grasp. But the logic of events is for all to see.

وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٣)...

and thy Lord is not unmindful of all that ye do.

C3325. Trials and tribulations, persecution and exile, and the patient endurance and constancy with which they were met by the Believers-all are known to Allah and will be credited to their account.



رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي

My Lord! Verily, I have wronged myself, so forgive me.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Qasas

القصص

Introduction and Summary

This Surah continues the subject of Revelation and its reception by those to whom it is sent. But it emphasises new points: how the recipient of inspiration is prepared for his high destiny, even in the growth of his ordinary life, and how the rejection of Allah's Message by groups of men or by individuals is caused by overweening arrogance or avarice. The plight of those who reject the Truth is contrasted with the reward of the righteous.

With the possible exception of a few verses, it belongs to the late Makkan period, just preceding the Hijrah.

Summary- Pharaoh was arrogant and unjust, but Allah's Plan was to strengthen the weak; in infancy Moses was prepared for his mission; in youth he trusted in the Lord and was guided; in his exile he found help and love; and when he was called, he was supported by Allah (28:1-42, and C. 173).

So was the Holy Prophet Muhammad fed spiritually by Allah's Grace, and his Revelation was recognised by those who knew the earlier Revelations: it came to an old and sacred Centre, to warn those seduced by this world's life (28:43-60, and C. 174).

The Future is with those who repent, have faith, and do good; for all Mercy and Truth are with Allah (28:61-75, and C. 175).

But men puffed up with wealth, like Quran, will come to an evil end, while the lowly and the righteous will attain Allah's Mercy (8:76-88, C. 176).

C.173 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(28:1-42)

Allah's Messengers are men, and win through good life
By Allah's Grace and their Faith. So Moses
Was saved from the Tyrant's wrath in infancy,
And reared in the Tyrant's own den, but gently
In a mother's love. In youth was he endowed
With wisdom and knowledge; strength and the will
To do right. In sorrow or misfortune
He trusted on Allah and opened his heart
To Him. On self-imposed exile the won
Love by his chivalry and confidence by Truth.
In his mission he triumphed over arrogant
Wrong by his meekness, patience, and Faith.
So good follows good, and Evil must fall.
Cursed, loathed, disgraced, and despised.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طسم (١)

1. Ta Sin Mim.

C3326. See n. 3137 to 26:1.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢)

2. These are Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear.

C3327. See n. 3138 to 26:2.

نَتْلُوا عَلَيْكَ مِن نَّبَإِ مُوسَىٰ وَفِرْعَوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣)

3. We rehearse to thee some of the story of Moses and Pharaoh in Truth, for people who believe.

C3328. The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses and his mother were guided in the child's infancy, that even as he grew up, he might be prepared for his high destiny; how in youth he trusted Allah in the most awkward situations and sought His help; how he fled into exile, and yet found love and support because of his well-doing: and how, when he was called to his mission, he received Allah's favour, which defeated all the plots of his enemies.

Thus Allah's Plan works continuously in the web of events. Those who have faith will thus see the hand of Allah in everything and welcome the light that comes to them by Revelation. With such a Faith there is no room for Chance or blind Fate. (R).

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا...

4. Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections,

C3329. For a king or ruler to make invidious distinctions between his subjects, and specially to depress or oppress any particular class of his subjects, is a dereliction of his kingly duties, for which he is responsible to Allah.

Pharaoh and his clique were intoxicated with pride of race and pride of material civilization, and grievously oppressed the Israelites.

Pharaoh decreed that all male sons born to his Israelite subjects should be killed, and the females kept alive for the pleasure of the Egyptians. Moses was saved in a wonderful way, as related further.

...يَسْتَضْعِفُ طَائِفَةً مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءهُمْ...

depressing a small group among them:

their sons he slew but he kept alive their females:

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٤)

for he was indeed a maker of mischief.

...وَنُرِيدُ أَن نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

5. And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed in the land,

C3330. What Pharaoh wished was to crush them. But Allah's Plan was to protect them as they were weak, and indeed to make them custodians and leaders in His Faith, and to give them in inheritance a land "flowing with milk and honey".

Here they were established in authority for such time as they followed Allah's Law. As regards Pharaoh and his ministers and hosts, they were to be shown that they would suffer, at the hands of the Israelites, the very calamities against which they were so confidently taking precautions for themselves.

...وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ (٥)

to make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs,

...وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ

6. To establish a firm place for them in the land,

...وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ ...

and to show Pharaoh, Haman,

C3331. Haman was evidently Pharaoh's minister, not to be confounded with a Haman who is mentioned in the Old Testament (Esther 3:1), as a minister of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) King of Persia, the same who invaded Greece, and ruled from B.C. 485 to 464.

... وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ (٦)

and their hosts, at their hands, the very things against which they were taking precautions.

C3332. Pharaoh was trying to kill the Israelites. Instead, the Plagues of Egypt, invoked by Moses, killed thousands of Egyptians (7:133, and notes 1091-92), because "they were steeped in arrogance,-a people given to sin."

In pursuing the Israelites in their flight, Pharaoh and his army were themselves overwhelmed in the sea.

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى أُمِّ مُوسَى أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ...

7. So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses:
"Suckle (thy child),

...فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي...

but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve:

C3333. The Egyptian midwives had orders to kill Israelite babies. Moses was saved from them, and his mother nursed the infant at her breast herself.

But when the danger of discovery was imminent, she put him into a chest or basket, and Boated him on the river Nile. It flowed by the King's palace, and the chest with the baby was picked up, as related further on.

The mother had no -cause to fear or grieve afterwards, as the child grew up under her tender care and became afterwards one of the Prophets of Allah.

...إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٧)

for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our Messengers."

فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا...

8. Then the people of Pharaoh picked him up (from the river):

(it was intended) that (Moses) should be to them an adversary and a cause of sorrow:

C3334. This was the Plan of Providence: that the wicked might cast a net round themselves by fostering the man who was to bring them to naught and be the instrument of their punishment, or

(looking at it from the other side) that Moses might learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians in order to expose all that was hollow and wicked in it.

...إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ (٨)

for Pharaoh and Haman and (all) their hosts were men of sin.

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتُ عَيْنٍ لِّي وَلَكَ...

9. The wife of Pharaoh said:

"(Here is) a joy of the eye, for me and for thee:

C3335. He was a darling to look at, and Pharaoh had apparently no son, but only a daughter, who afterwards shared his throne. This is on the supposition that the Pharaoh was Thothmes I (see Appendix IV, Surah 7)..

...لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ...

slay him not.

...عَسَى أَن يَنفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا...

It may be that he will be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son."

...وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٩)

And they perceived not (what they were doing)!

C3336. In all life Providence so orders things that Evil is defeated by its own weapons. Not only is it defeated, but it actually, though unwittingly, advances the cause of Good!

In non-religious language this is called the work of the Ironic Fates. If Thomas Hardy had not made Napoleon the Puppet of Fate in his "Dynasts", he could well have taken Pharaoh as an illustration of the Irony of Fate, or, as we should prefer to call it, the working of the Universal Plan of Allah. (R).

وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَى فَارِغًا...

10. But there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses:

...إِن كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِي بِهِ لَوْلَا أَن رَّبَطْنَا عَلَى قَلْبِهَا...

she was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not strengthened her heart (with faith),

...لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠)...

so that she might remain a (firm) believer.

C3337. The mother's heart felt the gaping void at parting from her son; but her Faith in Allah's Providence kept her from betraying herself.

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ...

11. And she said to the sister of (Moses), "Follow him."

...فَبَصُرَتْ بِهِ عَن جُنُبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (١١)...

So she (the sister) watched him in the character of a stranger, and they knew not.

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِن قَبْلُ...

12. And We ordained that he refused suck at first,

...فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ...

until (his sister came up and) said:

"Shall I point out to you the people of a house that will nourish and bring him up for you

C3338. For you: i.e., on your behalf.

Thus Moses got the benefit of his mother's milk as well as the prestige and the opportunities of being brought up

in the royal family, with the best of teachers to teach him Egyptian wisdom. In addition, there was the comfort to his mother.

...وَهُمْ لَهُ نَاصِحُونَ (١٢)

and be sincerely attached to him?"...

...فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَى أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ...

13. Thus did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, that she might not grieve,

...وَلِتَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٣)

and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true:

but most of them do not understand.

C3339. Allah's promise is always true, but short-sighted people, if they are a little thwarted in their plan, do not understand that Allah's wisdom, power, and goodness are far more comprehensive than any hide plans which they may form.

Section 2

...وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَى آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا

14. When he reached full age, and was firmly established (in life), We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge:

C3340. Full age may be taken to be mature youth, say between 18 and 30 years of age. By that time a person is fully established in life; his physical build is completed, and his mental and moral habits are formed.

In this case, as Moses was good at heart, true and loyal to his people, and obedient and just to those among whom he lived, he was granted wisdom and knowledge from on high, to be used for the times of conflict which were coming for him.

His internal development being complete, he now goes out into the outer world, where he is again tried and proved, until he gets his divine commission.

...وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٤)

for thus do We reward those who do good.

...وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ...

15. And he entered the City at a time when its people were not watching: and he found there two men fighting --

C3341. That may have been either the time of the noontime siesta, when all business is suspended even now in Egypt, or

the time of night, when people are usually asleep.

The latter is more probable, in view of verse 18 below. But there is also another suggestion.

A guest in a Palace is not free to wander about at will in the plebeian quarters of the City at all sorts of hours, and this applies even more to an inmate of the Palace brought up as a son.

Moses was therefore visiting the City privately and eluding the guards. His object may have been to see for himself how things were going on; perhaps he had heard that his people were being oppressed, as we may suppose that he had retained contact with his mother.

...هَٰذَا مِن شِيعَتِهِ وَهَٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ...

one of his own religion, and the other, of his foes.

...فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِي مِن شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ... ...

Now the man of his own religion appealed to him against his foe,

...فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْهِ... ...

and Moses struck him with his fist and made an end of him.

C3342. His object was apparently to strike him so as to release the Israelite, not to kill the Egyptian,

In fact he killed the Egyptian. This was unfortunate in more ways than one. His visit to the City was clandestine; he had taken the side of the weaker and despised party; and he had taken the life of an Egyptian.

He was full of regrets and repentance, and he prayed to Allah, and obtained Allah's forgiveness.

...قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ...

He said:

"This is a work of Evil (Satan):

...إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٥)

for he is an enemy that manifestly misleads!"

...قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي...

16. He prayed: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me!"

...فَغَفَرَ لَهُ...

So (Allah) forgave him:

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٦)

for He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٧)

17. He said: "O my Lord! for that Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace on me, never shall I be a help to those who sin!"

C3343. He takes a conscious and solemn vow to dedicate himself to Allah, and to do nothing that may in any way assist those who were doing wrong.

This was his general idea, but no plan had yet shaped itself in his mind, until a second catastrophe brought matters to a head, and he was plunged in adventure.

فَأَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ...

18. So he saw the morning in the City, looking about, in a state of fear,

... فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِخُهُ...

when behold, the man who had, the day before, sought his help called aloud for his help (again).

...قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى إِنَّكَ لَغَوِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٨)

Moses said to him: "Thou art truly, it is clear, a quarrelsome fellow!"

C3344. The man was an Israelite. But Moses was himself in a distracted mood, for the reasons given in n. 3342 above, and he was exasperated at this public appeal to him again.

فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَن يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا قَالَ...

19. Then, when he decided to lay hold of the man who was an enemy to both of them, that man said:

C3345. When Moses considered further that the Egyptian was unjust, he was going to intervene again, when he received a double warning, one from the Egyptian who was fighting, and the other from some man (Israelite or Egyptian) who was friendly to him, as explained below.

We may suppose that after the first day's fight, there had been a great deal of talk in the bazaars, both among Israelites and Egyptians. Probably the Israelites were elated at finding a champion-perhaps more elated than they should have been, and in a provocative mood, which deserved Moses' rebuke. Probably the Egyptians had discussed who this new champion was, and had already apprised the Palace, to which Moses had not dared to return.

...يَا مُوسَى أَتُرِيدُ أَن تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ...

"O Moses!

is it thy intention to slay me as thou slewest a man yesterday?

...إِن تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَن تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

Thy intention is none other than to become a powerful violent man in the land,

...وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَن تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ (١٩)

and not to be one who sets things right!"

C3346. The Egyptian saw the tactical advantage of his position. In effect he said:

'We have found out all about you. You live in the Palace, and yet you come clandestinely and kill our Egyptian. Are you going to do the same with me? You are nothing but a bully! And you talk of setting things right! That is what you should do if you were true to your salt!'

وَجَاء رَجُلٌ مِّنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَى قَالَ...

20. And there came a man, running, from the furthest end of the City. He said:

C3347. Apparently rumours had reached the Palace, a Council had been held, and the death of Moses had been decreed!

...يَا مُوسَى إِنَّ الْمَلَأَ يَأْتَمِرُونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ...

"O Moses! the Chiefs are taking counsel together about thee, to slay thee:

so get thee away,

...إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ (٢٠)

for I do give thee sincere advice."

فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ...

21. He therefore got away therefrom, looking about, in a state of fear.

C3348. Moses saw that his position was now untenable, both in the Palace and in the City, and indeed anywhere in Pharaoh's territory. So he suffered voluntary exile. But he did not know where to go to.

His mind was in a state of agitation. But he turned to Allah and prayed. He got consolation, and felt that after all it was no hardship to leave Egypt, where there was so much injustice and oppression.

...قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢١)

He prayed:

"O my Lord! save me from people given to wrongdoing."

Section 3

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ...

22. Then when he turned his face towards (the land of) Madyan, he said:

C3349. East of Lower Egypt, for about 300 miles, runs the Sinai Peninsula, bounded on the south by the Gulf of Suez, and on the north by what was the Isthmus of Suez, now cut by the Suez Canal. Over the Isthmus ran the highroad to Palestine and Syria, but a fugitive could not well take that road, as the Egyptians were after him.

If he could, after crossing the Isthmus, plunge into the Sinai desert, east or south-east, he would be in the Midianite territory, where the people would be Arabs and not Egyptians. He turned thither, and again prayed to Allah for guidance.

عَسَى رَبِّي أَن يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ (٢٢)...

"I do hope that my Lord will show me the smooth and straight Path."

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ...

23. And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan, he found there a group of men watering (their flocks),

C3350. The first thing that a wanderer in a desert would make for would be an oasis where he could get water from a spring or well, the shade of trees against the scorching sun, and some human company.

The Midianite watering place was probably a deep well, as surface springs are rare in sandy deserts, where the water level is low, unless there was a hill from which issued a spring.

يَسْقُونَ وَوَجَدَ مِن دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ ...

and besides them he found two women who were keeping back (their flocks).

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا...

He said: "What is the matter with you?"

...قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاء...

They said: "We cannot water (our flocks) until the shepherds take back (their flocks):

...وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ (٢٣)

and our father is a very old man."

C3351. Here is a pretty little idyll, told in the fewest and most beautiful words possible.

Moses arrives at an oasis in the desert, weary and travel worn, with his mind full of anxiety and uncertainty owing to his recent experiences in Egypt. He was thirsty and would naturally seek water. At the well or spring he found shepherds (or perhaps goat-herds) watering their flocks.

As a stranger it was not for him to thrust himself among them. He waited under the shade of a tree until they should finish. He noticed two damsels, also waiting with their flocks, which they had come to water. His chivalry was roused. He went at once among the goat-herds, made a place for the flocks of the damsels, gave them water, and then resumed his place in the shade.

They were modest maidens, and had given him in three Arabic words the key of the whole situation.

'Abuna shaykhun Kabirun our father is a very old man, and therefore cannot come to water the flocks; we therefore do the work; we could not very well thrust ourselves among these men.'

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ...

24. So he watered (their flocks) for them;

then he turned back to the shade, and said:

...رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ (٢٤)

"O my Lord! truly am I in (desperate) need of any good that thou dost send me!"...

C3352. The maidens are gone, with smiles on their lips and gratitude in their hearts. What were the reflections of Moses as he returned to the shade of the tree?

He returned thanks to Allah for the bright little vision which he had just seen. Had he done a good deed? Precious was the opportunity he had had. He had slaked his thirst. But he was a homeless wanderer and had a longing in his soul, which he dared not put into words.

Those shepherds were no company for him. He was truly like a beggar in desperate need. For any little good that came his way, he was grateful.

But what was this? -this vision of a comfortable household, presided over by an old man rich in flocks and herds, and richer still in two daughters, as modest as they were beautiful?

Perhaps he would never see them again! But Allah was preparing another surprise for him.

فَجَاءتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَمْشِي عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاء...

25. Afterwards one of the (damsels) came (back) to him, walking bashfully.

...قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا... ...

She said: "My father invites thee that he may reward thee for having watered (our flocks) for us."

C3353. Scarcely had he rested, when one of the damsels came back, walking with bashful grace! Modestly she gave her message.

'My father is grateful for what you did for us. He invites you, that he may thank you personally, and at least give some return for your kindness.'

...فَلَمَّا جَاءهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ...

So when he came to him and narrated the story, he said:

"Fear thou not:

...نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٥)

(well) hast thou escaped from unjust people."

C3354. Nothing could have been more welcome than such a message, and through such a messenger.

Moses went of course, and saw the old man. He found such a well-ordered patriarchal household. The old man was happy in his daughters and they in him. There was mutual confidence. They had evidently described the stranger to him in terms which made his welcome a foregone conclusion.

On the other hand Moses had allowed his imagination to paint the father in something of the glorious colours in which his daughters had appeared to him like an angelic vision.

The two men got to be friends at once. Moses told the old man his story,-who he was, how he was brought up, and what misfortunes had made him quit Egypt. Perhaps the whole household, including the daughters, listened breathlessly to his tale. Perhaps their wonder and admiration were mingled with a certain amount of pity-perhaps with some more tender feeling in the case of the girl who had been to fetch him.

In any case the stranger had won his place in their hearts. The old man, the head of the household, assured him of hospitality and safety under his roof. As one with a long experience of life he congratulated him on his escape. 'Who would live among unjust people? It is as well you are free of them!'

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ...

26. Said one of the (damsels): "O my (dear) father! engage him on wages:

C3355. A little time passes. A guest after all cannot stay for ever. They all feel that it would be good to have him with them permanently.

The girl who had given her heart to him had spoken their unspoken thoughts. Why not employ him to tend the flocks?

The father was old, and a young man was wanted to look after the flocks. And-there may be other possibilities.

إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ (٢٦)...

truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty"...

C3356. Strong and trusty: Moses had proved himself to be both, and these were the very qualities which a woman most admires in the man she loves.

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَن تَأْجُرَنِي

ثَمَانِيَ حِجَجٍ ...

27. He said:

"I intended to wed one of these my daughters to thee, on condition that thou serve me for eight years;

C3357. A little time passed, and at length the father broached the subject of marriage. It was not for the fugitive to suggest a permanent tie, especially when, in the wealth of this world, the girl's family was superior, and they had an established position, while he was a mere wanderer.

The father asked if he would marry one of the daughters and stay with them for at least eight years, or if he liked, ten years, but the longer term was at his option. If he brought no dower, his service for that period was more than sufficient in lieu of dower.

The particular girl intended was no doubt tacitly settled long before, by the mutual attraction of the young hearts themselves. Moses was glad of the proposal, and accepted it.

They ratified it in the most solemn manner, by appealing to Allah. The old man, knowing the worth of his son-in-law, solemnly assured him that in any event he would not take advantage of his position to be a hard task-master or to insist on anything inconsistent with Moses' interests, should a new future open out to him. And a new and glorious future was awaiting him after his apprenticeship.

...فَإِنْ أَتْمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِندِكَ...

but if thou complete ten years, it will be (grace) from thee.

...وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ...

But I intend not to place thee under a difficulty:

...سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٢٧)

thou wilt find me, indeed, if Allah wills, one of the righteous."

...قَالَ ذَٰلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ

28. He said:

"Be that (the agreement) between me and thee:

...أَيَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ

whichever of the two terms I fulfil, let there be no ill-will to me.

...وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ (٢٨)

Be Allah a witness to what we say."

C3358. In patriarchal society it was not uncommon to have a marriage bargain of this kind conditional on a certain term of service.

In this case the episode conveys two lessons.

- A man destined to be a messenger of Allah is yet a man, and must pass through the ups and downs of life like any other man:

  only he will do it with more grace and distinction than other men.

- The beautiful relations in love and marriage may themselves be a preparation for the highest spiritual destiny that may await a Messenger of Allah.

  A woman need not necessarily be a snare and a temptation: she may be the understanding help-mate that the Lady Khadija was to the holy Prophet.

Section 4

...فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ آنَسَ مِن جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا

29. Now when Moses had fulfilled the term, and was travelling with his family, he perceived a fire in the direction of Mount Tur.

C3359. The episode in the desert, full of human interest, now closes, and we come to the threshold of the sacred Call to the divine ministry of Moses. Here we may compare this passage with that in 27:7-14 and previous passages.

In this passage we are told, after reference to Moses' preparation for his high destiny, of the particular sin of Arrogance and Sacrilege of which Pharaoh was guilty (28:38-39), how it was punished, and with what instruments in the hands of Moses and Pharaoh.

The notes on the earlier passage should be read, as explanations already given need not now be repeated. (R).

...قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا...

He said to his family: "Tarry ye; I perceive a fire;

...لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ (٢٩)

I hope to bring you from there some information, or a burning firebrand, that ye may warm yourselves."

C3360. Note how the transition is effected from the happy life of Moses to the new prophetic mission.

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِن شَاطِئِ الْوَادِي الْأَيْمَنِ...

30. But when he came to the (Fire), a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley,

...فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَن يَا مُوسَى...

from a tree in hallowed ground: "O Moses!

C3361. We are to suppose the appearance of a bush burning but not consumed (Exod. 3:2), a device adopted by the Scottish Church in its armorial bearings. Scotland apparently took that emblem and motto (Nec tamen consumebatur, 'nevertheless it was not consumed') from the Synod of the Reformed Church of France, which had adopted it in 1583. (I am indebted for this information to the Rev. D.Y. Robertson, Chaplain of the Church of Scotland in Simla, India).

The real explanation of the Burning Bush will be found in 27:8, n. 3245: it was not a fire, but a reflection of the Glory of God.

...إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٠)

verily I am Allah, the Lord of the Worlds...

...وَأَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ

31. "Now do thou throw thy rod!"

...فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ... ...

But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it had been a snake, He turned back in retreat and retraced not his steps:

...يَا مُوسَى أَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ... ...

"O Moses!" (it was said), "draw near, and fear not:

...إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْآمِنِينَ (٣١)

for thou art of those who are secure.

C3362. The verbal meaning is: 'you have nothing to fear from what appears to be a snake: it is a snake, not for you, but for Pharaoh.'

But there is a deeper meaning besides.

Moses had now been called to a higher prophetic mission. He had to meet the hatred of the Egyptians and circumvent their trickery and magic. He had now the security of Faith: in all dangers and difficulties Allah would guide and protect him, for he was actually in Allah's service, one of the Elect.

...اسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ

32. "Move thy hand into thy bosom, and it will come forth white without stain (or harm),

...وَاضْمُمْ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ...

and draw thy hand close to thy side (to guard) against fear.

C3363. Literally, "draw thy wing close to thy side, (away) from fear".

When a bird is frightened, it ruffles its wings and prepares to fly away, but when it is calm and composed, it sits with its wings drawn close to its sides, showing a mind secure from danger.

Cf. also n. 2550 to 20:22.

...فَذَانِكَ بُرْهَانَانِ مِن رَّبِّكَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ...

Those are the two credentials from thy Lord to Pharaoh and his Chiefs:

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٣٢)

for truly they are a people rebellious and wicked."

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ أَن يَقْتُلُونِ (٣٣)

33. He said: "O my Lord! I have slain a man among them, and I fear lest they slay me.

C3364. It is not that Moses is not reassured from all fear on account of the apparent snake which his rod had become, or from the sacred and unfamiliar surroundings in which he found himself.

On this point his heart has been completely assured. But he is still new to his mission, and the future is obscure to his mind. Pharaoh was after him, to take his life, and apparently with good cause, because one of Pharaoh's men had been slain at his hands. And now he is commanded to go to Pharaoh and rebuke him and his Chiefs.

The inner doubts and difficulties of his human mind he frankly lays before his Lord, and asks for a little human and visible support, which is granted him at once, viz.; the help of his brother Aaron.

وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي...

34. "And my brother Aaron -- he is more eloquent in speech than I:
so send him with me as a helper, to confirm (and strengthen) me;

...إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَن يُكَذِّبُونِ (٣٤)

for I fear that they may accuse me of falsehood."

قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا...

35. He said: "We will certainly strengthen thy arm through thy brother, and invest you both with authority, so they shall not be able to touch you:

C3365. To touch you: to approach you anywhere near, in the wonders and Signs that you will show them under the divine authority with which you are invested.

...بِآيَاتِنَا أَنتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُونَ (٣٥)

with Our Signs shall ye triumph -- you two as well as those who follow you."

C3366. The potency of Allah's Light is such that its divine rays reach the humblest of those who seek after Him.

The Prophets can certainly work wonders, but their sincere followers in Faith can do so also in their own spheres. Wonders may appeal to people, but they are not the highest signs of Allah's workings, and they are around us every day in our lives.

فَلَمَّا جَاءهُم مُّوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرًى...

36. When Moses came to them with Our Clear Signs, they said:

"This is nothing but sorcery faked up:

C3367. This is what Moses was thinking of when he had said: "They may accuse me of falsehood".

To accuse the purest Truth of lying is a favourite trick of those whose chief stock-in-trade is deception and sorcery and catching the attention of the vulgar by arts adapted to their ignorant minds!

...وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٦)

never did we hear the like among our fathers of old!"

C3368. 'As to this higher talk of the worship of the One true God, why, our ancestors have worshipped power and patronage, as concentrated in Pharaoh, from the most ancient times!'

وَقَالَ مُوسَى رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَن جَاء بِالْهُدَى مِنْ عِندِهِ...

37. Moses said:

"My Lord knows best who it is that comes with guidance from Him

...وَمَن تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ...

and whose End will be best in the Hereafter:

...إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٣٧)

certain it is that the wrongdoers will not prosper."

C3369. Cf. 6:135.

The only argument in such a case is an appeal to Allah, and to the ultimate Future. Both of these appeals require Faith. But even if you do not rely on anything so high, you can see that Falsehood or evils crystallised in ancestral customs are not going to do any one any good.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي...

38. Pharaoh said: "O Chiefs! no god do I know for you but myself:

C3370. Pharaoh claimed, himself, to be God,-not only one god among many, but the only god: "I am your Lord Most High": 79:24.

At any rate he did not see why his people should worship any one but him.

...فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَا هَامَانُ عَلَى الطِّينِ فَاجْعَل لِّي صَرْحًا...

therefore, o Haman! light me a (kiln to bake bricks) out of clay, and build me a lofty palace,

C3371. I understand his speech to his minister Haman to be sarcastic. But some Commentators have taken it very seriously and imagined that he actually thought of reaching the heavens by budding lofty towers.

...لَّعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى...

that I may mount up to the god of Moses:

...وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٣٨)

but as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!"

وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ...

39. And he was arrogant and insolent in the land, beyond reason -- he and his hosts:

...وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ (٣٩)

they thought that they would not have to return to Us!

C3372. They did not believe in the Hereafter. They did not understand that every deed must have its inevitable consequence, good, or evil, unless the Grace of Allah intervenes to save us from ourselves!

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ...

40. So We seized him and his hosts, and We flung them into the sea:

C3373. Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the sea in their pursuit of the Israelites: see 7:130-136.

They are the type of men who lead-only to Destruction. They invite, not to Peace and Happiness, but to the Fire of Wrath, mutual Envy, and Hatred.

...فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٠)

now behold what was the End of those who did wrong!

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ...

41. And We made them (but) leaders inviting to the Fire;

...وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ (٤١)

and on the Day of Judgment no help shall they find.

وَأَتْبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً...

42. In this world We made a Curse to follow them:

C3374. Power and patronage may be lauded by sycophants and selfish place-hunters; but when they are misused, and when their exposure causes their fall, they suffer ignominy even in this life. If they manage to escape exposure while alive, it often happens that they are found out after their death, and the curses of many

generations follow those whose oppressions and wrong-doing spoiled the fair face of Allah's earth.

But even this is nothing to the true Punishment that will come in the Hereafter. There, true values will be restored, and some of the highest and mightiest will be in the lowest depths of degradation.

...وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ هُم مِّنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ (٤٢)

and on the Day of Judgment they will be among the loathed (and despised).

C.174 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(28:43-60)

As with Moses, so with the Prophet Muhammad;
Revelation was given to him, by which
He knew and understood, and led men and was kind.
He was a Mercy to men, sent by Allah, to warn
Those in sin, and, be precept and example,
To bring the Light to their very doors.
Those who had spiritual eyes rejoiced,
And walked in Allah's ancient Way, now reopened,
Valuing the things of the Spirit as Allah's
Own gifts, to be their possession forever!

Section 5

...وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَى

43. We did reveal to Moses the Book after We had destroyed the earlier generations,

...بَصَائِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٣)

(to give) Insight to men and Guidance and Mercy, that they might receive admonition.

C3375. After the destruction of the Pharaonic Tyranny and other similar Tyrannies before them, Allah began a new age of Revelation, the age of Moses and his Book.

Humanity began as it were with a clean slate again. It was a full Revelation (or Shariah) which may be looked at from three points of view:

1. as Light or Insight for men, so that they should not grope in darkness;
2. as a Guide to show them the Way, so that they should not be misled into wrong Paths; and
3. as a Mercy from Allah, so that by following the Way they may receive Allah's Forgiveness and Grace.

In 6:91, we have a reference to Light and Guidance in connection with the Revelation of Moses, and in 6:154 we have a reference to Guidance and Mercy in the same connection.

Here all three are combined, with the substitution of **Basair** for Nur.

Basair is the plural of Basirat, and may also be translated Proofs, as I have done in 6:104.

Cf. also 7:203, n. 1175, where the word is translated "Lights".

وَمَا كُنتَ بِجَانِبِ الْغَرْبِيِّ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ...

44. Thou wast not on the Western Side when We decreed the commission to Moses,

C3376. The Sinai Peninsula is in the north-west comer of Arabia. But the reference here is, I think, to the western side of the valley of Tuwa. Mount Tur, where Moses received his prophetic commission, is on the western side of the valley.

...وَمَا كُنتَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٤٤)

nor wast thou a witness (of those events).

وَلَكِنَّا أَنشَأْنَا قُرُونًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ...

45. But We raised up (new) generations, and long were the ages that passed over them;

C3377. That is, there were many generations that passed between Moses and the holy Prophet. Yet he knew by inspiration of the events of those times. Even if he had lived then, he could not have known the events that took place among the Midianites, except by inspiration, as he did not dwell among them.

...وَمَا كُنتَ ثَاوِيًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا...

but thou wast not a dweller among the people of Madyan, rehearsing Our Signs to them;

...وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ (٤٥)

but it is We Who send Messengers (with inspiration).

C3378. 'Though thou wast not among the Midianites, Our inspiration has told thee of the momentous events that took place among them when Moses was with them. This is itself a Sign that should make thy people understand.'

...وَمَا كُنتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا

46. Nor wast thou at the side of (the Mountain of) Tur when We called (to Moses),

...وَلَكِن رَّحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُم مِّن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ...

Yet (art thou sent) as a Mercy from thy Lord, to give warning to a people to whom no warner had come before thee:

C3379. This people was the Quraish.

'Though thou didst not see how Moses was invested with the prophetic office at Mount Tur, thou hast had similar experience thyself, and We have sent thee to the Quraish to warn them of all their sins, and to repent and come into the Faith'.

...لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٦)

in order that they may receive admonition.

...وَلَوْلَا أَن تُصِيبَهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُوا

47. If (We had) not (sent thee to the Quraish) -- in case a calamity should seize them for (the deeds) that their hands have sent forth, they might say:

...رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا ...

"Our Lord! why didst Thou not send us a messenger?

C3380. Now that a warner has come among them with all the authority that previous Messengers possessed and with all the knowledge which can only come by divine inspiration, they have no excuse left whatever. They cannot say, "No warner came to us."

If any evil comes to them, as the inevitable result of their ill-deeds, they cannot blame Allah and say that they were not warned.

Cf. 20:134.

... فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ وَنَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٧)

We should then have followed the Signs and been amongst those who believe!"

فَلَمَّا جَاءهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِندِنَا قَالُوا لَوْلَا أُوتِيَ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى...

48. But (now), when the Truth has come to them from Ourselves, they say,

"Why are not (Signs) sent to him, like those which were sent to Moses?"

...أَوَلَمْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى مِن قَبْلُ...

Do they not then reject (the Signs) which were formerly sent to Moses?

C3381. When a Revelation is sent to them, in the Quran, adapted to all their needs and the needs of the time they live in, they hark back to antiquity.

The holy Prophet was in many respects like Moses, but the times in which he lived were different from the times of Moses, and his age did not suffer from the deceptions of sorcery, like that of Moses.

The remedies which his age and future ages required (for his Message was universal) were different. His miracle of the Quran was different and most permanent than the Rod and the Radiant-White Hand of Moses.

But supposing that the Quraish had been humoured in their insincere demands, would they have believed?

Did they believe in Moses?

They were only put up by the Jews to make objections which they themselves did not believe in.

...قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا ...

They say: "Two kinds of sorcery, each assisting the other!"

C3382. Moses was called a sorcerer by the Egyptians, and the wonderful words of the Quran were called sorcery by the Quraish.

As the Quran confirmed the Message of Moses, the Quraish objectors said that they were in collusion.

The Quraish did not believe in Allah's Revelation at all.

... وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُلٍّ كَافِرُونَ (٤٨)

And they say: "For us, we reject all (such things)!"

قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَى مِنْهُمَا أَتَّبِعْهُ...

49. Say: "Then bring ye a Book from Allah, which is a better Guide than either of them, that I may follow it!

...إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٩)

(Do), if ye are truthful!"

فَإِن لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُونَ أَهْوَاءهُمْ...

50. But if they hearken not to thee, know that they only follow their own lusts:

C3383. They were challenged to produce something better, to be a guide in life. But as they could not, it was evident that their objections were fractious. They were only following their own selfish lusts of power, monopoly, and exploitation of the poor and ignorant.

How can such people receive guidance?

...وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ اللَّهِ...

and who is more astray than one who follows his own lusts, devoid of guidance from Allah?

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥٠)...

For Allah guides not people given to wrongdoing.

Section 6

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٥١)

51. Now have We caused the word to reach them themselves, in order that they may receive admonition.

C3384. Before this the Quraish might have said that the Word of Allah had come to the Hebrews in their tongue or in Greek, which was used by the Hebrews in the time of Jesus. Now that Word is brought to their own doors, in their own Arabic tongue, by a man of their own race and family. Surely they have no excuse now for remaining strangers to the higher moral and spiritual law.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِهِ هُم بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢)

52. Those to whom We sent the Book before this -- they do believe in this (Revelation);

وَإِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ...

53. And when it is recited to them, they say:

"We believe therein,

...إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّنَا... ...

for it is the Truth from our Lord:

...إِنَّا كُنَّا مِن قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ (٥٣)

indeed we have been Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will) from before this."

C3385. There were Christians and Jews who recognised that Islam was a logical and natural development of Allah's revelations as given in earlier ages, and they not only welcomed and accepted Islam, but claimed, and rightly, that they had always been Muslims.

In that sense Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus had all been Muslims. (R).

أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ...

54. Twice will they be given their reward,

C3386. Their credit is twofold,

- in that before they knew Islam, they followed the earlier Law in truth and sincerity, and
- when they were offered Islam, they readily recognised and accepted it, suffered in patient perseverance for its sake, and brought forth the fruits of righteousness.

...بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَدْرَؤُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ... ...

for that they have persevered, that they avert Evil with Good,

...وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (٥٤)

and that they spend (in charity) out of what We have given them.

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ...

55. And when they hear vain talk, they turn away therefrom

...وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ...

and say: "To us our deeds, and to you yours;

C3387. The righteous do not encourage idle talk or foolish arguments about things sacred. If they find themselves in some company in which such things are fashionable, they leave politely. Their only rejoinder is:

> "We are responsible for our deeds, and you for yours; we have no ill-will against you; we wish you well, and that is why we wish you to know of the knowledge we have received; after that knowledge you cannot expect us to go back to the Ignorance which we have left."

... سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ...

peace be to you:

...لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ (٥٥)

we seek not the ignorant."

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء...

56. It is true thou wilt not be able to guide everyone whom thou lovest: but Allah guides those whom He will

C3388. The immediate occasion for this was the death of Abu Talib, an uncle whom the holy Prophet loved dearly and who had befriended and protected him.

The Prophet was naturally anxious that he should die in the profession of the true Faith, but the pagan Quraish leaders persuaded him to remain true to the faith of his fathers. This was an occasion of disappointment and grief to the Prophet.

We are told that in such circumstances we should not grieve. All whom we love do not necessarily share our views or beliefs. We must not judge.

Allah will guide whom He pleases and as He pleases. He alone knows the true inwardness of things.

...وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (٥٦)

and He knows best those who receive guidance.

وَقَالُوا إِن نَّتَّبِعِ الْهُدَى مَعَكَ نُتَخَطَّفْ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا...

57. They say: "If we were to follow the guidance with thee, we should be snatched away from our land."

C3389. Some Quraish said: "We see the truth of Islam, but if we abandon our people, we shall lose our hold on the land, and other people will dispossess us."

The answer is twofold, one literal and the other of deeper import.

1. 'Your land?

   Why, the sanctuary of Makkah is sacred and secure because Allah has made it so. If you obey Allah's Word, you will be strengthened, not weakened.'

2. 'Makkah is the symbol of the Fortress of Spiritual Well-being. The Fruit of every Deed comes or should come as a tribute to Spiritual Well-being.

   What are you afraid of?

It is Allah's Fortress. The more you seek Allah, the stronger you are in the Fortress.'

...أَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّن لَّهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا...

Have We not established for them a secure Sanctuary,

...يُجْبَى إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِزْقًا مِن لَّدُنَّا ...

to which are brought as tribute fruits of all kinds? --

a provision from Ourselves?

...وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٧)

But most of them understand not.

...وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَرْيَةٍ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا...

58. And how many populations We destroyed, which exulted in their life (of ease and plenty)!

...فَتِلْكَ مَسَاكِنُهُمْ لَمْ تُسْكَن مِّن بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا...

Now those habitations of theirs, after them, are deserted -- all but a (miserable) few!

...وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ (٥٨)

and We are their heirs!

C3390. A life of ease and plenty is nothing to boast of. Yet peoples or cities or civilisations grow insolently proud of such things.

There were many such in the past, which are now mere names! Their very sites are deserted in most cases, or buried in the debris of ages.

India is full of such sites nearly everywhere. The sites of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro are the most ancient hitherto unearthed in India, and they are themselves in layers covering centuries of time! And how many more there may be, of which we do not know even names! Fatehpur-Sikri was a magnificent ruin within a single generation. And there are thousands of Qasbas once flourishing and now reduced to small villages or altogether deserted.

But God is merciful and just. He does not destroy or degrade a people until they have had full opportunities of turning in repentance to Him and they have deliberately rejected His Law and continued in the practice of iniquity.

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا...

59. Nor was thy Lord the one to destroy a population until He had sent to its Center a Messenger, rehearsing to them Our Signs:

...وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَى إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ (٥٩)

nor are We going to destroy a population except when its members practice iniquity.

وَمَا أُوتِيتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتُهَا...

60. The (material) things which ye are given are but the conveniences of this life and the glitter thereof;

C3391. The good things of this life have their uses and serve their convenience. But they are fleeting and their value is infinitely lower than that of Truth and Justice and Spiritual Well-being, the gifts which come as it were from Allah. No wise soul will be absorbed in the one and neglect the other, or will hesitate for a moment if it comes to be a choice between them.

...وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى...

but that which is with Allah is better and more enduring:

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٠)

will ye not then be wise?

C.175 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(28:61-75)

Material good is nothing compared
To the spiritual. In the Hereafter

No plea 'that others misled' will avail.
Each soul must, answer for itself.
Whether it honoured Allah alone
Or worshipped something else,
And whether it received or rejected
The Teachers sent by Allah. The Wisdom
And Plan of Allah are beyond all praise:
And Mercy and truth proceed from Him.
And there is no other-none-besides Him.

Section 7

أَفَمَن وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا...

61. Are (these two) alike? --

one to whom We have made a goodly promise, and who is going to reach its (fulfillment),

C3392. The two classes of people are:

1. those who have faith in the goodly promise of Allah to the righteous, and who are doing everything in life to reach the fulfilment of that promise,

   i.e., those who believe and work righteousness, and

2. those who are ungrateful for such good things in this life as Allah has bestowed on them, by worshipping wealth or power or other symbols or idols of their fancy,

   i.e., those who reject Faith and lead evil lives, for which they will have to answer in the Hereafter.

The two classes are poles asunder, and their future is described below.

...فَهُوَ لَاقِيهِ كَمَن مَّتَّعْنَاهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

and one to whom we have given the good things of this life,

...ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ (٦١)...

but who, on the Day of Judgment, is to be among those brought up (for punishment)?

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ...

62. That Day Allah will call to them, and say:

...أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ (٦٢)

"Where are my 'partners'? -- whom ye imagined (to be such)?"

قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ...

63. Those against whom the charge will be proved, will say:

C3393. This and the next verse are concerned with the examination of those who neglected truth and righteousness and went after the worship of false gods. These were the "partners" they associated with Allah.

In so far as they were embodied in false or wicked leaders, the leaders will disown responsibility for them. 'We ourselves went wrong, and they followed our example, because it suited them: they worshipped, not us, but their own lusts.'

...رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاء الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا أَغْوَيْنَاهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا ...

"Our Lord! these are the ones whom we led astray:

we led them astray, as we were astray ourselves:

...تَبَرَّأْنَا إِلَيْكَ...

we free ourselves (from them) in Thy presence!

...مَا كَانُوا إِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُونَ (٦٣)

It was not us they worshipped."

C3394. Cf. 10:28.

False worship often names others, but really it is the worship of Self. The others whom they name will have nothing to do with them when the awful Penalty stands in the sight of both. Then each wrong-doer will have to look to his own case.

The wicked will then realise the gravity of the situation and wish that they had accepted the true guidance of Allah's Messengers.

وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ...

64. It will be said (to them): "Call upon your 'partners' (for help)":

they will call upon them, but they will not listen to them; and they will see the Penalty (before them);

...لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ (٦٤)

(how they will wish) 'If only they had been open to guidance!'

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٦٥)

65. That Day (Allah) will call to them, and say: "What was the answer ye gave to the Messengers?"

C3395. Now we come to the examination of those who rejected or persecuted Allah's Messengers on the earth.

It may be the same men as those mentioned in 28:62-64, but this is a different count in the charge.

فَعَمِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ (٦٦)

66. Then the (whole) story that day will seem obscure to them (like light to the blind) and they will not be able (even) to question each other.

C3396. In their utter confusion and despair their minds will be blank. The past will seem to them unreal, and the present unintelligible, and they will not even be able to consult each other, as every one's state will be the same.

فَأَمَّا مَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَسَى أَن يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ (٦٧)

67. But any that (in this life) had repented, believed, and worked righteousness, will have hopes to be among those who achieve salvation.

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ...

68. Thy Lord does create and choose as He pleases:

C3397. As He pleases: according to His own Will and Plan.

Allah is not dependent on other people for advice or help. He has no partners. All creation is an act of His Will, and no one can direct Him how or why certain things should be, because He is supreme in wisdom and knowledge.

He chooses His messengers also by His own unfettered choice. Inspiration or spiritual knowledge and dignity cannot be judged of by our relative or temporary standards. Worldly greatness or even wisdom do not necessarily go with spiritual insight.

...مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ...

no choice have they (in the matter):

...سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٨)

Glory to Allah! and far is He above the partners they ascribe (to Him)!

وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٦٩)

69. And thy Lord knows all that their hearts conceal and all that they reveal.

C3398. Men may form all sorts of vain wishes or conceal their designs. But Allah's Will is supreme, and nothing can withstand its fulfilment.

...وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

70. And He is Allah: there is no god but He.

...لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَى وَالْآخِرَةِ...

To him be praise, at the first and at the last:

...وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٧٠)

or Him is the Command, and to Him shall ye (all) be brought back.

...قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ...

71. Say: see ye?

If Allah were to make the Night perpetual over you to the Day of Judgment,

C3399. In the physical world the Night and the Day are both blessings, the one for rest and the other for work, and the alternation itself is one of the mercies of Allah, and none but He can give us these blessings.

- If we were perpetually resting, or screened from the light, our faculties would be blunted and we should be worse than dead.
- If we were perpetually working, we should be tired, and we should also be dead in another way.

This daily miracle keeps us alive and prepares us, in this our probationary life, for our final destiny in the Hereafter.

In the same way our spiritual strivings require periodical alternations of rest in the form of attention to our temporal concerns: hence the justification of a good and pure life on the plane of this earth also.

Also, in the world's history, there are periods when a living messenger stimulates intense spiritual activity, and periods when it is comparatively quiescent (the so-called Dark Ages); but both are examples of the working of Allah's Plan of wisdom and mercy.

But this applies only up to the Day of Judgment. After that we shall be on another plane altogether.

...مَنْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِضِيَاءٍ...

what god is there other than Allah, who can give you enlightenment?

...أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ (٧١)

Will ye not then hearken?

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ...

72. Say: see ye? If Allah were to make the Day perpetual over you to the Day of Judgment,

...مَنْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ...

what god is there other than Allah, who can give you a Night in which ye can rest?

أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٧٢)...

Will ye not then see?

C3400. In verse 71 was mentioned a "perpetual Night," for which the faculty of "hearkening" was appropriate, as all light was shut out.

In this verse a **perpetual Day** is mentioned, for which the faculty of "seeing" is appropriate. Through many doors can the higher knowledge enter our souls.

Shall we not use each of them as the occasion demands?

وَمِن رَّحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ...

73. It is out of His Mercy that He has made for you Night and Day -- that ye may rest therein,

وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٣)...

and that ye may seek of His Grace --

and in order that ye may be grateful.

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ...

74. The Day that He will call on them, He will say:

C3401. Cf. 28:62 above.

The reminiscence of the words closes and rounds off the argument of this Section.

أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ (٧٤)...

"Where are My 'partners' whom ye imagined (to be such)?"

وَنَزَعْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا...

75. And from each people shall We draw a witness,

C3402. Cf. 4:41.

The Prophet from each People or Nation will bear testimony that he preached the true gospel of Unity, and the People who rejected him will be asked to show the Proof or authority on which they rejected him: Cf. 2:111

...فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ...

and We shall say: "Produce your Proof":

...فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (٧٥)...

then shall they know that the Truth is in Allah (alone), and the (lies) which they invented will leave them in the lurch.

C3403. In that new world, Allah will be the only Truth or Reality, and all the fancies or lies, which had been invented in this world of reflected or relative truths mixed with illusions, will have vanished, and left those who relied on them in the lurch. Cf. 6:24.

C.176 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(28:76-88)

Men puffed up with wealth, like Qarun,
Are not pleasing to Allah; for wealth
Is for service, not for hoarding or show
In the midst of his pride was Qarun
Swallowed up in the earth, and the earth
Knew him no more! It is the righteous
That attain a happy End. Let nothing
Keep your eyes back from that End:
Then, and only then, shall ye reach
The Eternal Reality, the glorious Reality,
Which is Allah, Who endureth forever!

Section 8

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِن قَوْمِ مُوسَى ...

76. Qarun was doubtless, of the people of Moses;

C3404. Qarun is identified with the Korah of the English Bible. His story is told in Num. 16:1-35.

He and his followers, numbering 250 men, rose in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, on the ground that their position and fame in the congregation entitled them to quality in spiritual matters with the Priests,-that they were as holy as any, and they claimed to bum incense at the sacred Altar reserved for the Priests.

They had an exemplary punishment: "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods: they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

... فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ...

but he acted insolently towards them:

...وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا ...

such were the treasures We had bestowed on him,

C3405. Qarun's boundless wealth is described in the Midrashim, or the Jewish compilations based on the oral teachings of the Synagogues, which however exaggerate the weight of the keys to be the equivalent of the load of 300 mules!

... إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ...

that their very keys would have been a burden to a body of strong men:

C3406. Usbat: a body of men, here used indefinitely. It usually implies a body of 10 to 40 men.

The old-fashioned keys were big and heavy, and if there were hundreds of treasure-chests, the keys must have been a great weight. As they were travelling in the desert, the treasures were presumably left behind in Egypt, and only the keys were carried. The disloyal Qarun had left his heart in Egypt, with his treasures.

...إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ...

Behold, his people said to him:

"Exult not,

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ (٧٦)

for Allah loveth not those who exult (in riches).

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ...

77. "But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter,

C3407. That is, 'spend your wealth in charity and good works. It is Allah Who has given it to you, and you should spend it in Allah's cause. Nor should you forget the legitimate needs of this life, as misers do, and most people become misers who think too exclusively of their wealth'.

If wealth is not used properly, there are three evils that follow:

1. its possessor may be a miser and forget all claims due to himself and those about him;
2. he may forget the higher needs of the poor and needy, or the good causes which require support; and
3. he may even misspend on occasions and cause a great deal of harm and mischief. Apparently Qarun had all three vices.

...وَلَا تَنسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا...

nor forget thy portion in this world:

...وَأَحْسِن كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ...

but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee,

...وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٧٧)

for Allah loves not those who do mischief."

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ عِندِي...

78. He said: "This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge which I have."

C3408. He was so blind and arrogant that he thought that his own merit, knowledge, and skill or cleverness had earned him his wealth, and that now, on account of it, he was superior to everybody else and was entitled to ride rough-shod over them. Fool!-he was soon pulled up by -Allah.

... أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِن قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ...

Did he not know that Allah had destroyed, before him (whole) generations --

...مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا...

which were superior to him in strength and greater in amount (of riches) they had collected?

...وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَن ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٧٨)

But the wicked are not called (immediately) to account for their sins.

C3409. Even Qarun was given a long run of enjoyment with his fabulous wealth before he had to be removed for the mischief he was doing.

...فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ...

79. So he went forth among his people in the (pride of his worldly) glitter.

...قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا يَا لَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ...

Said those whose aim is the Life of this World:

"Oh that we had the like of what Qarun has got!

...إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ (٧٩)

For he is truly a lord of mighty good fortune."

C3410. When he was in the hey-day of his glory, worldly people envied him and thought how happy they would be if they were in his place. Not so the people of wisdom and discernment. They knew a more precious and lasting wealth, which is described in the next verse.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ...

80. But those who had been granted (true) knowledge said:

...وَيْلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا...

"Alas for you! the reward of Allah (in the Hereafter) is best for those who believe and work righteousness:

...وَلَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ (٨٠)

but this none shall attain, save those who steadfastly persevere (in good)."

فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ...

81. Then We caused the earth to swallow him up and his house;

C3411. See n. 3404 above. Cf. also 16:45 and n. 2071.

Besides the obvious moral in the literal interpretation of the story, that material wealth is fleeting and may be a temptation and a cause of fall, there are some metaphorical implications that occur to me.

1. Material wealth has no value in itself, but only a relative and local value.
2. In body he was with Israel in the wilderness, but his heart was in Egypt with its fertility and its slavery. Such is the case of many hypocrites, who like to be seen in righteous company but whose thoughts, longings, and doing are inconsistent with such company.
3. There is no good in this life but comes from Allah. To think otherwise is to set up a false god besides Allah, Our own merits are so small that they should never be the object of our idolatry.
4. If Qarun on account of his wealth was setting himself up in rivalry with Moses and Aaron, he was blind to the fact that spiritual knowledge is far above any little cleverness in worldly affairs. Mob-leaders have no position before spiritual guides.

...فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِن فِئَةٍ يَنصُرُونَهُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

and he had not (the least little) party to help him against Allah,

...وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنتَصِرِينَ (٨١)

nor could he defend himself.

وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيْكَأَنَّ...

82. And those who had envied his position the day before began to say on the morrow: "Ah!

...اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ...

it is indeed Allah Who enlarges the provision or restricts it, to any of His servants He pleases!

C3412. Provision or Sustenance, both literally and figuratively: wealth and material things in life as well as the things that sustain our higher and spiritual faculties.

The rabble, that admired Qarun's wealth when he was in worldly prosperity, now sees the other side of the question and understands that there are other gifts more precious and desirable, and that these may actually be withheld from men who enjoy wealth and worldly prosperity.

In fact it is false prosperity, or no prosperity in the real sense of the word, which is without spiritual well-being.

...لَوْلَا أَن مَّنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا...

Had it not been that Allah was gracious to us, He could have caused the earth to swallow us up!

...وَيْكَأَنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨٢)

Ah!

those who reject Allah will assuredly never prosper."

Section 9

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا...

83. That House of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth:

C3413. High-handedness or arrogance, as opposed to submission to the Will of Allah, Islam.

Mischief, as opposed to doing good, bringing forth fruits of righteousness.

It is the righteous who will win in the end.

...وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٨٣)

and the End is (best) for the righteous.

...مَن جَاء بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا

84. If any does good, the reward to him is better than his deed;

...وَمَن جَاء بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا

يَعْمَلُونَ (٨٤)

but if any does evil, the doers of evil are only punished (to the extent) of their deeds.

C3414. A good deed has its sure reward, and that reward will be better than the merits of the doer.

An evil deed may be forgiven by repentance, but in any case will not be punished with a severer penalty than justice demands.

... إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ

85. Verily He Who ordained the Qur'án for thee,

C3415. That is:

- order in His wisdom and mercy that the Quran should be revealed, containing guidance for conduct in this life and
- the next, and further ordered that it should be read out and taught and its principles observed in practice.

It is because of this teaching and preaching that the holy Prophet was persecuted, but as Allah sent the Quran, He will see that those who follow it will not eventually suffer, but be restored to happiness in the Place of Return, for which see next note.

... لَرَادُّكَ إِلَى مَعَادٍ...

will bring thee back to the Place of Return.

C3416. Place of Return:

1. a title of Makkah;
2. the occasion when we shall be restored to the Presence of our Lord.

It is said that this verse was revealed at Juhfa, on the road from Makkah to Madinah, a short distance from Makkah on the Hijrah journey.

The Prophet was sad at heart, and this was given as consolation to him. If this was the particular occasion, the general meaning would refer the Place of Return to the occasion of the Resurrection, when all true values will be restored, however they may be disturbed by the temporary interference of evil in this life.

...قُل رَّبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَن جَاء بِالْهُدَى وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٨٥)

Say: "My Lord knows best who it is that brings true guidance, and who is in manifest error."

C3417. Allah knows the true from the false, and if we are persecuted for our Faith and attacked or spoken ill of because we dare to do right, our surest refuge is an appeal to Allah rather than to men.

وَمَا كُنتَ تَرْجُو أَن يُلْقَى إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ...

86. And thou hadst not expected that the Book would be sent to thee except as a Mercy from thy Lord:

C3418. Revelation and the preaching of Truth may in the beginning bring persecution, conflict, and sorrow in its train; but in reality it is the truest mercy from Allah, which comes even without our expecting it, as it came to the Prophets without their consciously asking for it.

This is proved in the history of Moses related in this Surah, and the history of the holy Prophet which it is meant to illustrate.

...فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٨٦)

therefore lend not thou support in any way to those who reject (Allah's Message).

C3419. If Allah's Message is unpalatable to evil and is rejected by it, those who accept it may (in their natural human feelings) sometimes wonder that such should be the case, and whether it is really Allah's Will that the conflict which ensues should be pursued.

Any such hesitation would lend unconscious support to the aggressions of evil and should be discarded. The servant of Allah stands forth boldly as His Mujahid (fighter of the good fight), daring all, and knowing that Allah is behind him.

...وَلَا يَصُدُّنَّكَ عَنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أُنزِلَتْ إِلَيْكَ

87. And let nothing keep thee back from the Signs of Allah after they have been revealed to thee:

...وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ...

and invite (men) to thy Lord,

...وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٨٧)

and be not of the company of those who join gods with Allah.

C3420. The soldier of Allah, having taken up the fight against evil, and knowing that he is in touch with the true Light, never yields an inch of ground. He is always to the fore in inviting others to his own ranks, but he himself refuses to be with those who worship anything else but Allah.

...وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ...

88. And call not, besides Allah, on another god.

...لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

There is no god but He.

...كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ...

Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face.

C3421. This sums up the lesson of the whole Surah.

The only Eternal Reality is Allah. The whole phenomenal world is subject to flux and change and will pass away, but He will endure for ever.

لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٨٨)...

To Him belongs the Command, and to Him will ye (all) be brought back.



أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَن يُتْرَكُوا أَن يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ

Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe," and that they will not be tested?

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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Al 'Ankabut

الْعَنكَبُوتِ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is the last of the series began with Surah 17, in which the growth of the spiritual man as an individual is considered, especially illustrated by the way in which the great Prophets were prepared for their work and received their mission, and the nature of Revelation in relation to the environments in which it was promulgated. (See Introduction to Surah 17). It also closes the sub-series beginning with Surah 26, which is concerned with the spiritual Light, and the reactions to it at certain periods of spiritual history (See Introduction to Surah 26).

The last Surah closed with a reference to the doctrine of the Ma'ad, or final Return of Man to Allah. This theme is further developed here, and as it is continued in the connecting link between the present series and those three Surahs.

In particular, emphasis is laid here on the necessity of linking actual conduct with the reception of Allah's revelation, and reference is again made to the stories of Noah, Abraham, and Lut among the Prophets, and the stories of Madyan, 'Ad, Thamud, and Pharaoh among the rejecters of Allah's Message. This world's life is contrasted with the real Life of the Hereafter.

Chronologically the main Surah belongs to the late Middle Makkan period, but the chronology has no significance except as showing how clearly the vision of the Future was revealed long before the Hijrah, to the struggling Brotherhood of Islam.

Summary- Belief is tested by trial in life and practical conduct; though Noah lived 950 years, his people refused Faith, and Abraham's generation threatened to burn Abraham (29:1-27), and C. 177).

Lut's people not only rejected Allah's Message but publicly defied him in sin; the 'Ad and the Thamud had intelligence but misused it, and Qurun, Pharaoh, and Haman perished for their overweening arrogance; they found their worldly power as frail as spider's web (29:28-44, and C. 178).

The Quran as a revelation stands on its own merits and is a Sign: it teaches the distinction between Right and Wrong, and shows the importance and excellence of the Hereafter (29:45-69, and C. 179).

C.177 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(29:1-27)

Faith must be tested in conflicts
Of practical life, but Good can never
Be submerged. On the contrary, Allah
Will wash off all stains from those

Who strive, and admit them to the Fellowship
Of the Righteous. Not so are the hypocrites
And those who reject Faith. Their hearts
Are diseased, and they will not accept
The right though a Noah preached it to them
For a thousand years, or an Abraham
Reasoned with them on Allah's most wonderful
providence. But the true will ever search out
The Truth, and Truth will always prevail.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم (١)

1. Alif Lam Mim.

C3422. For these Abbreviated Letters see n. 25 to 2:1.

We are asked to contrast, in our present life the real inner life against the outer life, and learn from the past about the struggles of the soul which upholds Allah's Truth, against the environment of evil, which resists it, and to turn our thoughts to the Ma'ad, or man's future destiny in the Hereafter.

أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَن يُتْرَكُوا أَن يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا...

2. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe,"

C3423. Mere lip profession of Faith is not enough. It must be tried and tested in the real turmoil of life.

The test will be applied in all kinds of circumstances, in individual life and in relation to the environment around us, to see whether we can strive constantly and put Allah above Self.

Much pain, sorrow, and self-sacrifice may be necessary, not because they are good in themselves, but because

they will purify us, like fire applied to a goldsmith's crucible to burn out the dross.

...وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ (٢)

and that they will not be tested?

...وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ

3. We did test those before them,

...فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٣)

and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.

C3424. The word **"know"** is used here more in the sense of testing than of acquiring knowledge.

Allah is All-Knowing: He needs no test to increase His own knowledge, but the test is to burn out the dross within ourselves, as explained in the last note.

...أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن يَسْبِقُونَا

4. Do those who practice evil think that they will get the better of us?

...سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (٤)

Evil is their judgment!

C3425. If the enemies of Truth imagine that they will "be first" by destroying Truth before it takes root, they are sadly at fault, for their own persecution may help to plant Allah's Truth more firmly in men's hearts.

... مَن كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ

5. For those whose hopes are in the meeting with Allah (in the Hereafter, let them strive);

C3426. The men of Faith look forward to Allah. Their quest is Allah, and the object of their hopes is the meeting with Allah. They should strive with might and main to serve Him in this life, for this life is short, and the Term appointed for their probation will soon be over.

... فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ...

for the Term (appointed) by Allah is surely coming:

C3427. The **Term (ajal)** may signify:

- the time appointed for death, which ends the probation of this life;
- the time appointed for this life, so that we can prepare for the Hereafter; the limit will soon expire.

In either case the ultimate meaning is the same.

We must strive now and not postpone anything for the future. And we must realize and remember that every prayer we make to Allah is heard by Him, and that every unspoken wish or motive of our heart, good or bad, is known to Him, and goes to swell our spiritual account.

...وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٥)

and He hears and knows (all things).

وَمَن جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ...

6. And if any strive (with might and main), they do so for their own souls:

C3428. All our striving ensures to our own spiritual benefit. When we speak of serving Allah, it is not that we confer any benefit on Him. For He has no needs, and is independent of all His Creation.

In conforming to His Will, we are seeking our own good, as in yielding to evil we are doing harm to ourselves.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦)

for Allah is free of all needs from all creation.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ...

7. Those who believe and work righteous deeds, from them shall We blot out all evil (that may be) in them,

C3429. In striving to purify our Faith and our Life, we are enabled to avoid the consequences of our misdeeds for Allah will forgive any evil in our past, and help to the

attainment of a Future based on the best of what we have done rather than on the poor average of our own merits.

The atonement or expiation is by Allah's Mercy, not by our merits or the merits or sacrifice of anyone else. (R).

...وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٧)

and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds.

...وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا

8. We have enjoined on man kindness to parents:

...وَإِن جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا...

but if they (either of them) strive (to force) thee to join with Me (in worship) anything of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not.

C3430. That is, no certainty in virtue of the spiritual light. In matters of faith and worship, even parents have no right to force their children. They cannot and must not hold up before them any worship but that of the One True God.

...إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٨)

Ye have (all) to return to Me, and I will tell you (the truth) of all that ye did.

C3431. Children and parents must all remember that they have all to go before Allah's tribunal, and answer, each for his own deeds.

In cases where one set of people have lawful authority over another set of people (as in the case of parents and children), and the two differ in important matters like that of Faith, the latter are justified in rejecting authority: the apparent conflict will be solved when the whole truth is revealed to all eyes in the final Judgment.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ (٩)

9. And those who believe and work righteous deeds, them shall We admit to the company of the Righteous.

C3432. The picking up again of the words which began verse 7 above shows that the same subject is now pursued from another aspect.

The striving in righteous deeds will restore fallen man to the society of the Righteous.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ...

10. Then there are among men such as say, "We believe in Allah;"

...فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ...

but when they suffer affliction in (the cause of) Allah, they treat men's oppression as if it were the Wrath of Allah!

...وَلَئِن جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ...

and if help comes (to thee) from thy Lord, they are sure to say, "We have (always) been with you!"

C3433. Cf. 9:56, and other passages where the cunning of the Hypocrites is exposed.

The man who turns away from Faith in adversity and only claims the friendship of the Faithful when there is something to be gained by it, is worthy of a double condemnation:

- first because he rejected Faith and Truth, and
- secondly because he falsely pretended to be of those whom he feared or hated in his heart.

But nothing in all creation is concealed from Allah.

...أَوَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠)

Does not Allah know best all that is in the hearts of all Creation?

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ (١١)

11. And Allah most certainly knows those who believe, and as certainly those who are Hypocrites.

C3434. Cf. 29:3 above.

The general opposition between Truth and Falsehood is now brought down to the specific case of the Hypocrites,

who are against the Faith militant but swear friendship with it when it seems to be gaining ground.

The argument is rounded off with the next two verses.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطَايَاكُمْ...

12. And the Unbelievers say to those who believe:

"Follow our path, and we will bear (the consequences) of your faults."

C3435. Besides the hypocrite there is another type of man who openly scoffs at Faith. 'Take life as we take it,' he says; 'we shall bear your sins.'

As if they could!

Each soul bears its own burdens, and no one else can bear them.

The principle also applies to the type of man who preaches vicarious atonement, for, if followed to its logical conclusion, it means both injustice and irresponsibility, and puts quite a different complexion on the nature of sin.

... وَمَا هُم بِحَامِلِينَ مِنْ خَطَايَاهُم مِّن شَيْءٍ...

Never in the least will they bear their faults:

...إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٢)

in fact they are liars!

وَلَيَحْمِلُنَّ أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَثْقَالًا مَّعَ أَثْقَالِهِمْ...

13. They will bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens along with their own,

C3436. Besides the burden of their own infidelity, they will bear the burden of deluding others with falsehood.

...وَلَيُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (١٣)

and on the Day of Judgement they will be called to account for their falsehoods.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ...

14. We (once) sent Noah to his people,

...فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا...

and he tarried among them a thousand years less fifty:

C3437. The story of Noah and his Flood is not told here. It is told in other places; e.g., see 11:25-48 or 26:105-122.

It is only referred to here to point out that Noah's period lasted a long time, 950 years. (Cf. Gen. 9:28-29, where his whole age is declared to have been 950 years, of which 350 years were after the Flood).

In spite of this long period, his contemporaries failed to listen, and they were destroyed.

But the story of the Ark remains an everlasting Sign and Warning to mankind-a Sign of deliverance to the righteous and of destruction to the wicked.

...فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١٤)

but the Deluge overwhelmed them while they (persisted in) sin.

...فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ

15. But We saved him and the Companions of the Ark,

...وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (١٥)

and We made the (Ark) a Sign for all Peoples!

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ...

16. And (We also saved) Abraham: Behold, he said to his people,

"Serve Allah and fear Him:

C3438. The story of Abraham has been told in various phases in different passages. The ones most germane to the present passage are:

21:51-72 (his being cast into the fire and being saved from it); and

19:41-49 (his voluntary exile from the home of his fathers).

Here the story is not told but is referred to in order to stress the following points;

- Abraham's people only responded to his preaching by threatening to burn him (29:16-18, 24);
- evil consorts with evil but will have a rude awakening (29:25);
- the good adhere to the good, and are blessed (29:26-27).

Note that the passage 29:19-23 is a parenthetical comment, though some Commentators treat a portion of it as part of Abraham's speech.

...ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١٦)

that will be best for you -- if ye understand!

...إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا

17. "For ye do worship idols besides Allah, and ye invent falsehood.

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا

The things that ye worship besides Allah have no power to give you sustenance:

...فَابْتَغُوا عِندَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ

then seek ye sustenance from Allah, serve Him, and be grateful to Him:

C3439. Sustenance: in the symbolic as well as the literal sense. Seek from Allah all that is necessary for your upkeep and development, and for preparing you for your future Destiny.

Lay all your hopes in Him and in no one else. Dedicate yourselves to His worship. He will give you all that is necessary for your growth and well being, and you

should show your gratitude to Him by conforming your will entirely to His.

...إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (١٧)

to Him will be your return.

...وَإِن تُكَذِّبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ

18. "And if ye reject (the Message), so did generations before you:

...وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (١٨)

and the duty of the messenger is only to preach publicly (and clearly)."

...أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ

19. See they not how Allah originates creation, then repeats it:

C3440. The originating of creation is the creation of primeval matter.

The repetition of the process of creation goes on constantly, for at every moment new processes are being called into being by the creative power of Allah, and according to His Laws.

And the final creation as far as man is concerned will be in the Ma'ad, when the whole world as man sees it will be entirely newly created on a different plane.

As far as Allah is concerned, there is nothing final, no first and last, for He is infinite. He was before our First and will be after our Last.

...إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (١٩)

truly that is easy for Allah.

...قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ

20. Say:

"Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation:

C3441. Travel through the earth: again, literally as well as symbolically.

If we actually go through this wide earth, we shall see the wonderful things in His Creation;

- the Grand Canyon and the Niagaras in America,
- beautiful harbors like that at Sydney in Australia,
- mountains like Fujiyama, the Himalayas, and Elburz in Asia,
- the Nile with its wonderful cataracts in Africa, the Fiords of Norway, the Geysers of Iceland,
- the city of the midnight sun in Tromsoe,
- and innumerable wonders everywhere.

But wonders upon wonders are disclosed in the constitution of matter itself, the atom, and the forces of energy, as also in the instincts of animals, and the minds and capacities of man. And there is no limit to these things.

Worlds upon worlds are created and transformed every moment, within and presumably beyond man's vision. From what we know we can judge of the unknown.

...ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ...

so will Allah produce a later creation:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢٠)

for Allah has power over all things.

...يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاء وَيَرْحَمُ مَن يَشَاء...

21. "He punishes whom He pleases, and He grants mercy to whom He pleases,

...وَإِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُونَ (٢١)

and towards Him are ye turned.

C3442. I think **ilaihi tuqlabun** is better translated "towards Him are ye turned" than "towards Him will be your return", as it implies not only the return of man to Allah in the Hereafter (turja'un in verse 17 above) but

also the fact explained in verse 22 that man's needs are always to be obtained from Allah:

man cannot frustrate Allah's designs, and can have no help or protection except from Allah: man has always to face Allah, whether man obeys Allah or tries to ignore Allah.

Man will never be able to defeat Allah's Plan. According to His wise Will and Plan, He will grant His grace or withhold it from man.

وَمَا أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ...

22. "Not on earth nor in heaven will ye be able (fleeing) to frustrate (His plan),

...وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (٢٢)

nor have ye, besides Allah, any protector or helper."

Section 3

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَئِسُوا مِن رَّحْمَتِي...

23. Those who reject the Signs of Allah and the Meeting, with Him (in the Hereafter), it is they who shall despair of My mercy:

...وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢٣)

it is they who will (suffer) a most grievous Penalty.

C3443. The emphasis is on **"they" (ulaika)**.

It is only the people who ignore or reject Allah's Signs and reject a Hereafter, that will find themselves in despair and suffering.

Allah's Mercy is open to all, but if any reject His Mercy, they must suffer.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ...

24. So naught was the answer of (Abraham's) people except that they said: "

Slay him or burn him."

...فَأَنجَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ النَّارِ...

But Allah did save him from the Fire:

C3444. See 21:66-70.

Abraham was cast into the fire, but he was unhurt, by the grace of Allah. So righteous people suffer no harm from the plots of the wicked. But they must leave the environment of evil even if they have to forsake their ancestral home, as Abraham did.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٤)

verily in this are Signs for people who believe.

...وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

25. And He said:

"For you, ye have taken (for worship) idols besides Allah, out of mutual love and regard between yourselves in this life;

C3445. In sin and wickedness there is as much log-rolling as in politics.

Evil men humor each other and support each other; they call each other's vice by high-sounding names. They call it mutual regard or friendship or love; at the lowest, they call it toleration.

Perhaps they flourish in this life by such arts. But they deceive themselves, and they deceive each other.

What will be their relations in the Hereafter?

They will disown each other when each has to answer on the principle of personal responsibility. Each will accuse the others of misleading him, and they will curse each other. But there will then be no help, and they must suffer in the Fire.

...ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا...

but on the Day of Judgement ye shall disown each other and curse each other:

...وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٢٥)

and your abode will be the Fire, and ye shall have none to help.

فَآمَنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَى رَبِّي...

26. But Lut had faith in Him: he said:

C3446. Lut was a nephew of Abraham. He adhered to Abraham's teaching and faith and accepted voluntary exile with him, for Abraham left the home of his fathers in Chaldaea and migrated to Syria and Palestine, where Allah gave him increase and prosperity, and a numerous family, who upheld the flag of Unity and the Light of Allah.

"I will leave home for the sake of my Lord:

...إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٦)

for He is Exalted in Might, and Wise."

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ...

27. And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and Revelation,

C3447. Isaac was Abraham's son and Jacob his grandson, and among his progeny was included Isma'il the eldest son of Abraham.

Each of these became a fountain-head of Prophecy and Revelation, Isaac and Jacob through Moses, and Isma'il through the holy Prophet Muhammad.

Jacob got the name of "Israel" at Bethel: Gen. 32:28; 35:10, and his progeny got the title of "The Children of Israel".

...وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا...

and We granted him his reward in this life;

...وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٢٧)

and he was in the Hereafter (of the company) of the Righteous.

C3448. Cf. 29:9, and 4:69, n. 586.

C.178 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(29:28-44)

Worldly power cannot through sin
Defy the right, as was proved in the ministry
Of Lut; nor can Intelligence misused
Stand in the place of Allah's Light; nor
Can boastful insolence do aught
But dig its own grave. The strength
And skill, the beauty and power, of this world's
Life are no more than a Spider's Web,
Flimsy before the force of the eternal
Verities that flow from Allah Supreme!

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ...

28. And (remember) Lut; behold, he said to his people:

...إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُم بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٨)

"Ye do commit lewdness, such as no people in Creation (ever) committed before you.

C3449. Cf. 7:80.

A discreet reference is made to their unspeakable crimes, which were against the laws of all nature.

أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ ...

29. "Do ye indeed approach men, and cut off the highway? --

C3450. They infested highways and committed their horrible crimes not only secretly, but openly and publicly, even in their assemblies.

Some Commentators understand **"cutting off the highway"** to refer to highway robberies: this is possible, and it is also possible that the crimes in their assemblies may have been injustice, rowdiness, etc. But the context

seems to refer to their own special horrible crime, and the point here seems to be that they were not ashamed of it and that they practiced it publicly. Degradation could go no further.

... وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ الْمُنكَرَ...

And practice wickedness (even) in your councils?"

...فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا...

But his people gave no answer but this: they said:

...ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٢٩)

"Bring us the Wrath of Allah if thou tellest the truth."

C3451. This is another instance of their effrontery, in addition to that mentioned in 7:82: the two supplement each other.

Here the point emphasised is that they did not believe in Allah or His Punishment, and dared Allah's Prophet Lut to bring about the Punishment if he could. And it did come and destroy them.

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٣٠)

30. He said: "O my Lord! Help Thou me against people who do mischief!"

Section 4

وَلَمَّا جَاءتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى ...

31. When Our Messengers came to Abraham with the good news,

C3452. See 11:69-76.

The angels, who were coming on the mission to destroy the people who were polluting the earth with their crimes, called on their way on Abraham to give the good news of the birth of a son to him in his old age.

When they told him their destination, he feared for his nephew who he knew was there. They reassured him and then came on to Lut.

... قَالُوا إِنَّا مُهْلِكُو أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ...

they said: "We are indeed going to destroy the people of this township:

C3453. By translating **"township"** I imply the two neighbouring populations of Sodom and Gomorrah, who had already gone too far in their crime, their shamelessness, and their defiance, to profit by any mercy from Allah.

...إِنَّ أَهْلَهَا كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ (٣١)

for truly they are (addicted to) crime."

قَالَ إِنَّ فِيهَا لُوطًا...

32. He said: "But there is Lut there."

...قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن فِيهَا...

They said:

"Well do we know who is there:

...لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ (٣٢)

we will certainly save him and his following, except his wife:

she is of those who lag behind!"

C3454. She was not loyal to her husband.

Tradition says that she belonged to the wicked people, and was not prepared to leave them. She had no faith in the mission either of her husband or of the angels who had come as his guests.

وَلَمَّا أَن جَاءتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا...

33. And when Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account, and felt himself powerless (to protect) them:

C3455. This part of the story may be read in greater detail in 11:77-83.

...وَقَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ...

but they said

"Fear thou not, nor grieve:

...إِنَّا مُنَجُّوكَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ (٣٣)

we are (here) to save thee and thy following, except thy wife:

she is of those who lag behind."

إِنَّا مُنزِلُونَ عَلَى أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ...

34. "For we are going to bring down on the people of this township a Punishment from heaven,

C3456. The Punishment was a rain of brimstone, which completely overwhelmed the Cities, with possibly an earthquake and a volcanic eruption (see 11:82).

...بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ (٣٤)

because they have been wickedly rebellious."

وَلَقَد تَّرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٣٥)

35. And We have left thereof an evident Sign, for any people who (care to) understand.

C3457. The whole tract on the east side of the Dead Sea (where the Cities were situated) is covered with sulphureous salts and is deadly to animal and plant life.

The Dead Sea itself is called in Arabic the Bahr Lut (the sea of Lut). It is a scene of utter desolation, that should stand as a Symbol of the Destruction that awaits Sin.

وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ ...

36. To the Madyan (people) (We sent) their brother Shu'aib. Then he said:

"O my people!

...اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٣٦)

serve Allah, and fear the Last Day:

nor commit evil on the earth, with intent to do mischief."

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ...

37. But they rejected him: then the mighty Blast seized them,

C3458. The story of Shu'aib and the Madyan people is only referred to here. It is told in 11:84-95.

Their besetting sin was fraud and commercial immorality. Their punishment was a mighty Blast, such as accompanies volcanic eruptions.

The point of the reference here is that they went about doing mischief on the earth, and never thought of the Ma'ad or the Hereafter, the particular theme of this Surah.

The same point is made by the brief references in the following two verses to the 'Ad and the Thamud, and to Qarun, Pharaoh, and Haman, though the besetting sin in each case was different.

The Midianites were a commercial people and trafficked from land to land; their frauds are well described as spreading "mischief on the earth".

...فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٣٧)

and they lay prostrate in their homes by the morning.

... وَعَادًا وَثَمُودَ

38. Remember also the 'Ad and the Thamud (people):

C3459. For the 'Ad people see 7:65-72, and n. 1040,

and for the Thamud, 7:73-79, and n. 1043.

The remains of their buildings show:

- that they were gifted with great intelligence and skill;
- that they were proud of their material civilization; and
- their destruction argues how the greatest material civilization and resources cannot save a People who disobey Allah's moral law.

... وَقَد تَّبَيَّنَ لَكُم مِّن مَّسَاكِنِهِمْ...

clearly will appear to you from (the traces) of their buildings (their fate):

...وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ...

the Evil One made their deeds alluring to them, and kept them back from the Path,

C3460. They were so arrogant and self-satisfied, that they missed the higher purpose of life, and strayed clean away from the Path of Allah.

Though their intelligence should have kept them straight, Evil made them crooked and led them and kept them astray.

...وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ (٣٨)

though they were gifted with Intelligence and Skill.

...وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ...

39. (Remember also) Qarun, Pharaoh, and Haman:

C3461. For Qarun see 28:76-82;

Pharaoh is mentioned frequently in the Quran, but he is mentioned in association with Haman in 28:6;

for their blasphemous arrogance and defiance of Allah see 28:38.

They thought such a lot of themselves, but they came to an evil end.

...وَلَقَدْ جَاءهُم مُّوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

there came to them Moses with Clear Signs, but they behaved with insolence on the earth;

...وَمَا كَانُوا سَابِقِينَ (٣٩)

yet they could not overreach (Us).

...فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنبِهِ...

40. Each one of them We seized for his crime:

...فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا...

of them, against some We sent a violent tornado (with showers of stones);

C3462. For **hasib** (violent tornado with showers of stones), see 17:68; this punishment as inflicted on the Cities of the Plain, of which Lut preached (54:34).

Some Commentators think that this also applied to the 'Ad, but their punishment is described as by a violent and unseasonable cold wind (41:16; 54:19 and 69:6), such as blows in sand-storms in the Ahqaf, the region of shifting sands which was in their territory.

...وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ...

some were caught by a (mighty) Blast;

C3463. For **saihat** (Blast) see 11:67 and n. 1561, as also n. 1047 to 7:78 and n. 1996 to 15:73.

This word is used in describing;

- the fate of the Thamud (11:67);
- Madyan (11:94);
- the population to which Lut preached (15:73);
- and the Rocky Tract (Hijr, 15:83), part of the territory of the Thamud;
- also in the Parable of the City to which came three Prophets, who found a single-believer (36:29).

...وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ...

some We caused the earth to swallow up;

C3464. This was the fate of Qarun: see 28:81.

Cf. also 16:45 and n. 2071.

...وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ أَغْرَقْنَا...

and some We drowned (in the waters):

C3465. This was the fate of the hosts of Pharaoh and Haman (28:40) as well as the wicked generation of Noah (26:120).

...وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٤٠)

it was not Allah Who injured (or oppressed) them:

they injured (and oppressed) their own souls.

...مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاء كَمَثَلِ الْعَنكَبُوتِ...

41. The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of the Spider,

...اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا...

who builds (to itself) a house;

...وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ ...

but truly the flimsiest of houses

C3466. The **Spider's house** is one of the wonderful Signs of Allah's creation. It is made up of fine silk threads spun out of silk glands in the spider's body.

There are many kinds of spiders and many kinds of spider's houses. Two main types of houses may be mentioned.

- There is the tubular nest or web, a silk-lined house or burrow with one or two trap-doors. This may be called his residential or family mansion.
- Then there is what is ordinarily called a spider's web, consisting of a central point with radiating threads running in all directions and acting as tie-beams to the quasi-circular concentric threads that form the body of the web. This is his hunting box.

The whole structure exemplifies economy in time, material, and strength. If an insect is caught in the net, the vibration set up in the radiating threads is at once communicated to the spider, who can come and kill his prey.

In case the prey is powerful, the spider is furnished with poison glands with which to kill his prey.

The spider sits either in the centre of the web or hides on the under-side of a leaf or in some crevice, but he always has a single thread connecting him with his web, to keep him in telephonic communication.

The female spider is much bigger than the male, and in Arabic the generic gender of '**Ankabut** is feminine.

... لَبَيْتُ الْعَنكَبُوتِ... ...

is the Spider's house,

C3467. Most of the facts in the last note can be read into the Parable. For their thickness the spider's threads are very strong from the point of view of relativity, but in our actual world they are flimsy, especially the threads of the gossamer spider floating in the air.

So is the house and strength of the man who relies on material resources however fine or beautiful relatively; before the eternal Reality they are as nothing.

The spider's most cunning architecture cannot stand against a wave of a man's hand. His poison glands are like the hidden poison in our beautiful worldly plans which may take various shapes but have seeds of death in them.

...لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤١)

if they but knew.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ مِن شَيْءٍ...

42. Verily Allah doth know of (everything) whatever that they call upon besides Him:

C3468. The last verse told us that men, out of spiritual ignorance, build their hopes on flimsy unsubstantial things (like the spider's web) which are broken by a thousand chance attacks of wind and weather or the actions of animals or men.

If they cannot fully grasp their own good, they should seek His Light. To Him everything is known,

- men's frailty,
- their false hopes,
- their questionable motives,

the false gods whom they enthrone in their midst, the mischief done by the neglect of Truth, and the way out for those who have entangled themselves in the snares of evil.

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٤٢)

and He is Exalted (in power), Wise.

He is All-Wise and is able to carry out all He wills, and they should turn to Him.

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ...

43. And such are the Parables We set for mankind,

...وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ (٤٣)

but only those understand them who have Knowledge.

C3469. Parables seem simple things, but their profound meaning and application can only be understood by those who seek knowledge and by Allah's grace attain it.

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ...

44. Allah created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions):

C3470. Cf. 6:73 and n. 896.

In all Allah's Creation, not only is there evidence of intelligent Purpose, fitting all parts together with wisdom, but also of supreme Goodness and cherishing Care, by which all needs are satisfied and all the highest and truest cravings fulfilled. These are like beckoning signals to lead on those who pray and search in Faith.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٤)

verily in that is a Sign for those who believe.

C.179 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(29:45-69)

Proclaim the Message of Allah, and pray
To Him for purity and guidance.
Allah's Revelation carries its own
Proofs and is recognized by men
Of wisdom. Its rejecters but lose
Their own chances of profiting
By the Truth, and attaining the Paths
That lead to Allah's own gracious Presence!

Section 5

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ...

45. Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee, and establish Regular Prayer:

C3471. The **tilawat** of the Quran implies:

- rehearsing or reciting it, and publishing it abroad to the world;
- reading it to ourselves;
- studying it to understand it as it should be studied and understood (2:121);
- meditating on it so as to accord our knowledge and life and desires with it.

When this is done, it merges into real Prayer, and Prayer purges us of anything (act, plan, thought, motive, words) of which we should be ashamed or which would work injustice to others. Such Prayer passes into our inmost life and being, for then we realize the Presence of Allah, and that is true **zikr** (or remembrance), for remembrance is the bringing to mind of things as present to us which might otherwise be absent to us.

And that is the greatest thing in life. It is subjective to us: it fills our consciousness with Allah. For Allah is in any case always present and knows all.

...إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ...

for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds;

...وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ...

and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt.

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ (٤٥)

And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do.

... وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ...

46. And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation),

C3472. Mere disputations are futile. In order to achieve our purpose as true standard-bearers for Allah, we shall have to find true common grounds of belief, as stated in the latter part of this verse, and also to show by our urbanity, kindness, sincerity, truth, and genuine anxiety, for the good of others, that we are not cranks or merely seeking selfish or questionable aims.

... إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ...

unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury):

C3473. Of course those who are deliberately trying to wrong or injure others will have to be treated firmly, as we are guardians of each other. With them there is little question of finding common ground or exercising patience, until the injury is prevented or stopped.

...وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ...

but say, "We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you;

...وَإِلَٰهُنَا وَإِلَٰهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (٤٦)

Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."

C3474. That is, the religion of all true and sincere men of Faith is, or should be, one; and that is the ideal of Islam.

وَكَذٰلِكَ ...

47. And thus

C3475. It is in this spirit that all true Revelation comes from Allah. Allah is One, and His Message cannot come in one place or at one time to contradict His Message in another place or at another time in spirit, though there may be local variations according to the needs or understanding of men at any given time or place.

... أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ فَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ...

(it is) that We have sent down the Book to thee. So the People of the Book believe therein,

C3476. The sincere Jews and Christians found in the holy Prophet a fulfillment of their own religion. For the names of some Jews who recognized and embraced Islam, see n. 3227 to 26:197.

Among the Christians, too, the Faith slowly won ground. Embassies were sent by the holy Prophet in the 6th and 7th years of the Hijrah to all the principal countries round Arabia, viz., the capital of the Byzantine Empire (Constantinople), the capital of the Persian Empire (Madain), the Sasanian capital known to the West by the Greek name of Ctesiphon, (about thirty miles south of modern Baghdad), Syria, Abyssinia, and Egypt. All these (except Persia) were Christian countries.

In the same connection an embassy was also sent to Yamama in Arabia itself (east of the Hijaz) where the Banu Hamfa tribe was Christian, like the Harith tribe of Najran who voluntarily sent an embassy to Madinah.

All these countries except Abyssinia eventually became Muslim, and Abyssinia itself has a considerable Muslim population now and sent some Muslim converts to Madinah in the time of the Prophet himself.

As a generalization it is true that the Jewish and the Christian peoples as they existed in the seventh century of the Christian era have been mainly absorbed by Islam, as well as the lands in which they predominated.

Remnants of them built up new nuclei. The Roman Catholic Church conquered new lands among the northern (Germanic) Pagans and the Byzantine Church among the eastern (Slavonic) Pagans, and the Protestantism of the 16th century gave a fresh stimulus to the main ideas for which Islam stands, viz., the abolition of priest craft, the right of private judgment, the simplification of ritual, and the insistence upon the simple, practical, everyday duties of life.

...وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاء مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ...

as also do some of these (pagan Arabs):

C3477. The Pagan Arabs also gradually came in until they were all absorbed in Islam.

...وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ (٤٧)

and none but Unbelievers reject Our Signs.

...وَمَا كُنتَ تَتْلُو مِن قَبْلِهِ مِن كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ

48. And thou wast not (able) to recite a Book, before this (Book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand:

C3478. The holy Prophet was not a learned man. Before the Quran was revealed to him, he never claimed to proclaim a Message from Allah. He was not in the habit of preaching eloquent truths as from a Book, before he received his Revelation, nor was he able to write or transcribe with his own hand.

If he had had these worldly gifts, there would have been some plausibility in the charge of the talkers of vanities that he spoke not from inspiration but from other people's books, or that he composed the beautiful verses of the Quran himself and committed them to memory in order to recite them to people.

The circumstances in which the Quran came bear their own testimony to its truth as from Allah.

...إِذًا لَّارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (٤٨)

in that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted.

...بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ

49. Nay, here are Signs self-evident in the hearts of those endowed with knowledge:

C3479. "Knowledge" ('ilm) means both power of judgment in discerning the value of truth and acquaintance with previous revelations.

It implies both literal and spiritual insight.

To men so endowed, Allah's revelations and Signs are self-evident. They commend themselves to their hearts, minds, and understandings, which are typified in Arabic by the word **sadr, "breast"**.

...وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ (٤٩)

and none but the unjust reject Our Signs.

C3480. Cf. the last clause of verse 47 above. There the argument was that the rejection of the Quran was a mark of Unbelief.

Now the argument is carried a stage farther. Such rejection is also a mark of injustice, a deliberate perversity in going against obvious Signs, which should convince all honest men.

...وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ

50. Yet they say: "Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?"

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٥٠)

Say:

"The Signs are indeed with Allah: and I am indeed a clear Warner."

C3481. See last note.

In the Quran, as said in verse 49, are Signs which should carry conviction to all honest hearts. And yet the Unbelievers ask for Signs! They mean some special kinds

of Signs or Miracles, such as their own foolish minds dictate.

Everything is possible for Allah, but Allah is not going to humor the follies of men or listen to their disingenuous demands. He has sent a Messenger to explain His Signs clearly, and to warn them of the consequences of rejection.

Is it not enough?

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ...

51. And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them?

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَذِكْرَىٰ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥١)

Verily, in it is Mercy and Reminder to those who believe.

C3482. The perspicuous Quran, explained in detail by Allah's Messenger, in conjunction with Allah's Signs in nature and in the hearts of men, should be enough for all. It is mere fractious opposition to demand vaguely something more.

Cf. also 6:124, and n. 946.

Section 6

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيدًا...

52. Say:

"Enough is Allah for a Witness between me and you:

...يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

He knows what is in the heavens and on earth.

C3483. The test of a Revelation is whether it comes from Allah or not. This is made clear by the life and teachings of the Messenger who brings it.

No fraud or falsehood can for a moment stand before Allah. All the most hidden things in heaven and earth are open before Him.

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٥٢)

And it is those who believe in vanities and reject Allah, that will perish (in the end)."

C3484. If Truth is rejected, Truth does not suffer. It is the rejecters who suffer and perish in the end.

...وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ

53. They ask thee to hasten on the Punishment (for them):

C3485. Cf. 22:47 and n. 2826.

The rejecters of Faith throw out a challenge out of bravado: "Let us see if you can hasten the punishment on us!"

This is a vain taunt. Allah's Plan will take its course, and can neither be delayed nor hastened. It is out of His Mercy that He gives respite to sinners, in order that they may have a chance of repentance. If they do not repent, the Punishment must certainly come to them -and on a sudden, before they perceive that it is coming! And then it will be too late for repentance.

...وَلَوْلَا أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَاءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ...

had it not been for a term (of respite) appointed, the Punishment would certainly have come to them:

...وَلَيَأْتِيَنَّهُم بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٥٣)

and it will certainly reach them, -- of a sudden, while they perceive not!

يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ...

54. They ask thee to hasten on the Punishment

C3486. The challenge of the wicked for Punishment was answered in the last verse by reference to Allah's merciful Respite, to give chances of repentance.

It is answered in this verse by an assurance that if no repentance is forthcoming, the Punishment will be

certain and of an all-pervasive kind. Hell will surround them on all sides, and above them and below them.

...وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ (٥٤)

but, of a surety, Hell will encompass the rejecters of Faith! --

...يَوْمَ يَغْشَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِن فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ

55. On the Day that the Punishment shall cover them from above them and from below them,

C3487. Cf. a similar phrase in 6:65.

...وَيَقُولُ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٥٥)

and (a Voice) shall say: "Taste ye (the fruits) of your deeds!"

C3488. This is not merely a reproach, but a justification of the Punishment. "It is you who brought it on yourselves by your evil deeds: blame none but yourselves. Allah's Mercy gave you many chances: His Justice has now overtaken you!"

يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ (٥٦)

56. O My servants who believe! truly, spacious is My Earth: therefore serve ye Me -- (and Me alone)!

C3489. There is no excuse for any one to plead that he could not do good or was forced to evil by his circumstances and surroundings, or by the fact that he lived in evil times.

We must shun evil and seek good, and Allah's Creation is wide enough to enable us to do that, provided we have the will, the patience, and the constancy to do it.

It may be that we have to change our village or city or country; or that we have to change our neighbors or associates; or to change our habits or our hours, our position in life or our human relationships, or our callings. Our integrity before Allah is more important than any of these things, and we must be prepared for exile (or Hijrah) in all these senses. For the means with

which Allah provides us for His service are ample, and it is our own fault if we fail.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ...

57. Every soul shall have a taste of death:

C3490. Cf. 3:185, n. 491, and 21:35 and n. 2697.

Death is the separation of the soul from the body when the latter perishes. We should not be afraid of death, for it only brings us back to Allah.

The various kinds of Hijrah or exile, physical and spiritual, mentioned in the last note, are also modes of death in a sense:

what is there to fear in them?

...ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ (٥٧)

in the end to Us shall ye be brought back.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا...

58. But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness -- to them shall We give a Home in Heaven, -- lofty mansions

C3491. The goodly homes mentioned in 16:41 referred to this life, but it was stated there that the reward of the Hereafter would be greater.

Here the simile of the Home is referred to Heaven:

- it will be beautiful;
- it will be picturesque, with the sight and sound of softly-murmuring streams;
- it will be lofty or sublime; and
- it will be eternal.

... تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

beneath which flow rivers, -- to dwell therein for aye; --

...نِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (٥٨)

an excellent reward for those who do (good)! --

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٥٩)

59. Those who persevere in patience, and put their trust in their Lord and Cherisher.

وَكَأَيِّن مِن دَابَّةٍ لَا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا ...

60. How many are the creatures that carry not their own sustenance?

C3492. If we look at the animal creation, we see that many creatures seem almost helpless to find their own food or sustain their full life, being surrounded by many enemies. Yet in the Plan of Allah they find full sustenance and protection. So does man. Man's needs-as well as helplessness-are by many degrees greater. Yet Allah provides for him as for all His creatures.

Allah listens to the wish and cry of all His creatures and He knows their needs and how to provide for them all. Man should not therefore hesitate to suffer exile or persecution in Allah's Cause.

... اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ...

It is Allah Who feeds (both) them and you:

...وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦٠)

for He hears and knows (all things).

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم ...

61. If indeed thou ask them

C3493. Cf. 23:84-89.

"Them" in both passages refers to the sort of inconsistent men who acknowledge the power of Allah, but are deluded by false notions into disobedience of Allah's Law and disregard of Allah's Message.

... مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon (to His Law);

C3494. Cf. 13:2, and 23:85.

The perfect order and law in Allah's universe should be Signs to man's intelligence to get his own will into tune with Allah's Will; for only so can he hope to attain his full development.

...لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ...

they will certainly reply, "Allah."

...فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٦١)...

How are they then deluded away (from the truth)?

...اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ...

62. Allah enlarges the sustenance (which He gives) to whichever of His servants He pleases; and He (similarly) grants by (strict) measure, (as He pleases):

C3495. Cf. 13:26.

Unequal gifts are not a sign of chaos in Allah's universe. Allah provides for all according to their real needs and their most suitable requirements, according to His perfect knowledge and understanding of His creatures.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٦٢)...

for Allah has full knowledge of all things.

...وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّن نَّزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء...

63. And if indeed thou ask them who it is that sends down rain from the sky,

C3496. In 29:61 above, the point was that there is a certain type of man that realizes the power of Allah, but yet goes after false ideas and false worship.

Here the point is that there is another type of man to whom the goodness of Allah is made clear by rain and the gifts of nature and who realizes the daily, seasonal, and secular changes which evidence Allah's goodness in giving us life (physical and Spiritual) and reviving us after we seem to die,-and who yet fails to draw the right conclusion from it and to make his own life true and beautiful, so that when his period of probation in this

transitory life is ended, he can enter into his eternal heritage.

Having come so far, such men fail at the crucial stage. At that stage they ought to have praised and glorified Allah and accepted His Grace and Light, but they show their want of true understanding by failing to profit by Allah's gifts.

...فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِن بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا...

and gives life therewith to the earth after its death,

...لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ...

they will certainly reply, "Allah!"

...قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ...

Say, "Praise be to Allah!"

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٦٣)...

But most of them understand not.

Section 7

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ...

64. What is the life of this world but amusement and play?

C3497. Cf. 6:32.

Amusement and play have no lasting significance except as preparing us for the serious work of life. So this life is but an interlude, a preparation for the real Life, which is in the Hereafter.

This world's vanities are therefore to be taken for what they are worth; but they are not to be allowed to deflect our minds from the requirements of the inner life that really matters.

...وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ... ...

But verily the Home in the Hereafter, that is life indeed,

...لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٦٤)

if they but knew.

...فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلْكِ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

65. Now, if they embark on a boat, they call on Allah, making their devotion sincerely (and exclusively) to Him;

C3498. Cf. 7:29, where I have slightly varied the English phrase according to the context.

It was shown in the last verse that the life of this world is fleeting, and that the true life-that which matters-is the Life in the Hereafter.

In contrast with this inner reality is now shown the shortsighted folly of man. Where he faces the physical dangers of the sea, which are but an incident in the phenomenal world, he actually and sincerely seeks the help of Allah; but when he is safely back on land, he forgets the Realities, plunges into the pleasures and vanities of fleeting phenomena, and his devotion, which should be given exclusively to Allah, is shared by idols and vanities of his own imagination. (R).

...فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٥)

but when He had delivered them safely to (dry) land, Behold, they give a share (of their worship to others)!

...لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوا

66. Disdaining ungratefully Our gifts and giving themselves up to (worldly) enjoyment!

C3499. Such folly results in the virtual rejection (even though it may not be express) of Allah and His Grace. It plunges man into the pleasures and vanities that merely delude and are bound to pass away.

This delusion, however, will come to an end when the true Reality of the Hereafter will shine forth in all its splendor.

...فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٦٦)

But soon will they know.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا آمِنًا وَيُتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ...

67. Do they not then see that We have made a Sanctuary secure, and that men are being snatched away from all around them?

C3500. If they want evidences of their folly in the phenomenal world itself, they will see sacred Sanctuaries where Allah's Truth abides safely in the midst of the Deluge of broken hopes, disappointed ambitions and unfulfilled plans in the world around.

The immediate reference was to the Sanctuary of Makkah and the gradual progress of Islam in the districts surrounding the Quraysh in the midst of the trying Makkan period.

But the general application holds good for all times and places.

أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ (٦٧)...

Then, do they believe in that which is vain, and reject the Grace of Allah?

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ...

68. And who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against Allah or rejects the Truth when it reaches Him?

C3501. Cf. 6:21.

Even from a worldly point of view those who reject Allah's Truth are at a disadvantage. But those who deliberately invent lies and set up false gods for worship, what punishment can we imagine for them except a permanent deprivation of Allah's grace, and a home in Hell? (R).

أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِلْكَافِرِينَ (٦٨)...

Is there not a home in Hell for those who reject Faith?

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا ...

69. And those who strive in Our (Cause),

C3502. "Strive in Our Cause." All that man can do is to strive in Allah's Cause. As soon as he strives with

might and main, with constancy and determination, the Light and Mercy of Allah come to meet him.

- They cure his defects and shortcomings.
- They provide him with the means by which he can raise himself above himself.
- They point out the Way, and all the Paths leading up to it.

See next note.

... فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا...

We will certainly guide them to Our Paths:

C3503. The Way of Allah (sirat-ul-Mustaqim) is a Straight Way. But men have strayed from it in all directions. And there are numerous Paths by which they can get back to the Right Way, the way in which the purity of their own nature, and the Will and Mercy of Allah require them to Walk.

All these numerous Paths become open to them if once they give their hearts in keeping to Allah and work in right Endeavour (Jihad) with all their mind and soul and resources. Thus will they get out of the Spider's web of this frail world and attain to eternal Bliss in the fulfillment of their true Destiny.

...وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٦٩)

for verily Allah is with those who do right.



فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَهُمْ فِي رَوْضَةٍ يُحْبَرُونَ

Then as for those who believed (in the Oneness of Allah Islamic Monotheism) and did righteous good deeds, such shall be honoured and made to enjoy luxurious life (forever) in a Garden of delight (Paradise).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Rum

الرُّوم

Introduction and Summary

This Surah, as remarked in the Introduction to the last Surah, deals with the question of Ma'ad or the Final End of Things, from various points of view. In the last Surah, we saw that Revelation was linked up with Life and Conduct, and Time (looking backwards and forwards) figured forth the frailty of this Life. In this Surah the Time theme and its mystery are brought into relation with human history in the foreground and the evolution of the world in all its aspects in the background.

The corruption introduced by man is cleared away by Allah, Whose Universal Plan points to the Hereafter. We shall see that the next two Surahs (31 and 32) present the theme in other aspects. All four are introduced with the Abbreviated Letters Alif, Lam, Mim, which (without being dogmatic) I have suggested as symbolical of the Past, Present and Future.

The Chronology of this Surah is significant. It was revealed about the 7th or 6th year before the Hijrah corresponding to 615-16 of the Christian era, when the tide of Persian conquest over the Roman Empire was running strong, as explained in Appendix VIII (to follow this Surah). The Christian Empire of Rome had lost Jerusalem to the Persians, and Christianity had been humbled in the dust. At that time it seemed outside the bounds of human possibility, even to one intimately acquainted with the inner resources and conditions of the Persian and Roman armies and empires, that the tables would be turned and the position reserved within the space of eight or nine years.

The pro-Persian Pagan Quraysh rejoiced exceedingly, and redoubled their taunts and persecution against the Holy Prophet, whose Message was a renewal of the Message of Christ preached in Jerusalem. Then was this passage 30-1-6 revealed, clearly foreshadowing the final defeat of Persia (Appendix VIII, 14-16) as a prelude to the destruction of the Persian Empire. There is no doubt about the prophecy and its fulfilment, for the exulting Pagans of Makkah laid a heavy wager against the fulfilment of the prophecy with Abu Bakr, and they lost it on its fulfilment.

But the rise fall even of such mighty empires as the Persian and Roman Empires, were but small events on the chequerboard of Time, compared to a mightier movement that was taking birth in the promulgation of Islam.

In the seventh or sixth year before the Hijrah, and for a year or two after the Hijrah, Islam was struggling in the world like the still small voice in the conscience of humanity. It was scarcely heeded, and when it sought to insist upon its divine claim, it was insulted, assaulted, persecuted, boycotted, and (as it seemed) suppressed. The agony of Taif (two years before the

Hijrah) and the murder-plot on the eve of the Hijrah were yet to come. But the purpose of Allah is not to be thwarted. Badr (A.H. 2 i.e. A.C. 624), rightly called the critical Day of Decision, began to redress the balance of outward events in early Islam, in the same year in which Issues (Appendix VIII, 16) began to redress the balance of outward events in Perso-Roman relations. Mightier events were yet to come.

A new inner World was being created through Islam. The spiritual Revolution was an infinitely greater moment in world history. The toppling down of priestcraft and false worship, the restoration of simplicity in faith and life, the rehabilitation of this life as the first step to the understanding of the Hereafter, the displacement of superstition and hair-splitting theology by a spirit of rational enquiry and knowledge, and the recognition of the divine as covering not merely an isolated thing called "Religion" but the whole way of Life. Thought, and Feeling-this was and is the true Message of Islam and its mission. Its struggle-its fight-continues, but it is not without effect, as may be seen in the march of centuries in world history.

Summary- the ebb and flow of worldly power-as symbolized in the conflict of Persian and Roman Empire-are but outward events; the deeper meaning is in the working of Allah's Universe-how Good and Evil reach their final end (30:1-19, and C.180).

The changes and changing variety in Allah's Creation, physical, moral, and spiritual, yet point to Unity in Nature and Religion; man should not break away from that Unity, but glorify Him, the One, for there is none like unto Him (30:20-40, C. 181).

The hands of men have wrought corruption and mischief; but Allah purifies the moral world as He does the world of physical nature, strengthening the weak and pulling down the mighty in due season; wait therefore in patience and constancy, and be not depressed (30:41-60, and C.182).

C.180 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(30:1-19)

Great Empires rise and fall, conquer
And are conquered, as happened
To Rome and Persia; but the true Decision
Is with Allah, Who will make the righteous
Rejoice. Men may see but the outward
Crust of things, but in truth the End
Of things is all-in-all. In His own
Good time He will separate good from evil;
Praise and glory to Him forever!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم (١)

1. Alif Lam Mim.

C3504. See n. 25 to 2:1 and Introduction to this Surah.

غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ (٢)

2. The Roman Empire has been defeated --

C3505. The remarkable defeats of the Roman Empire under Heraclius and the straits to which it was reduced are reviewed in Appendix VIII (to follow this Surah).

It was not merely isolated defeats; the Roman Empire lost most of its Asiatic territory and was hemmed in on all sides at its capital, Constantinople.

فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ...

3. In a land close by;

The defeat, **"in a land close by"** must refer to Syria and Palestine, Jerusalem was lost in 614-15 A.D., shortly before this Surah was revealed.

... وَهُم مِّن بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ (٣)

but they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious --

C3506. The Pagan Quraish of Makkah rejoiced at the overthrow of Rome by Persia. They were pro-Persian, and in their heart of hearts they hoped that the nascent movement of Islam, which at that time was, from a worldly point of view, very weak and helpless, would also collapse under their persecution.

But they misread the true Signs of the times. They are told here that they would soon be disillusioned in both their calculations, and it actually so happened at the battle of Issus in 622 (the year of Hijrah) and in 624, when Heradius carried his campaign into the heart of Persia (see Appendix VIII) and the Makkan Quraish were beaten off at Badr.

فِي بِضْعِ سِنِينَ...

4. Within a few years.

C3507. Bidh'un in the text means a short period-a period of from three to nine years.

The period between the loss of Jerusalem (614-15) by the Romans and their victory at Issus (622) was seven years, and that to the penetration of Persia by Heraclius was name years.

See last note.

... لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن بَعْدُ...

With Allah is the Decision, in the Past and in the Future:

... وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (٤)

on that Day shall the Believers rejoice --

C3508. See n. 3506 and **C3508.** See n. 3506 and Appendix VIII.

The battle of Badr (2 A.H. i.e. 624 A.D.) was a real time of rejoicing for the Believers and a time of disillusionment for the arrogant Quraish, who thought

that they could crush the whole movement of Islam in Madinah as they had tried to do in Makkah. but they were signally repulsed.

See n. 352 to 3:13.

بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ...

5. With the help of Allah.

... يَنصُرُ مَن يَشَاءُ...

He helps whom He will,

C3509. "Whom He will." As explained elsewhere, Allah's Will or Plan is not arbitrary: it is full of the highest wisdom. His Plan is formed in mercy, so as to safeguard the interests of all his creatures, against the selfish aggrandizement of any section of them. And He is able to carry out His Plan in full, and there is no power that can stop or delay His Plan.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥)

and He is Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

وَعْدَ اللَّهِ...

6. (It is) the promise of Allah.

C3510. The promise refers to the Decision of all things by the Command of Allah, Who will remove all troubles and difficulties from the path of His righteous Believers, and help them to rejoice over the success of their righteous Cause.

This refers to all times and all situations. The righteous should not despair in their darkest moments, for Allah's help will come.

Ordinarily men are puffed up if they score a seeming temporary success against the righteous, and do not realize that Allah's Will can never be thwarted.

... لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٦)

Never does Allah depart from His promise: but most men understand not.

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

7. They know but the outer (things) in the life of this world:

C3511. Men are misled by the outward show of things, though the inner reality may be quite different.

Many seeming disasters are really godsends if we only understood.

... وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ (٧)

but of the End of things they are heedless.

C3512. Akhirat: may refer to the End of things or enterprises in history as well as the Hereafter in the technical theological sense.

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ...

8. Do they not reflect in their own minds?

... مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

Not but for just ends and for a term appointed, did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all between them:

C3513. Cf. 15:85.

Here the argument is about the ebb and flow of worldly power, and the next clause is appropriately added, **"and for a term appointed"**. Let not any one who is granted worldly power or advantage run away with the notion that it is permanent. It is definitely limited in the high Purpose of Allah, which is just and true. And an account will have to be given of it afterwards on basis of strict personal responsibility.

... وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكَافِرُونَ (٨)

yet are there truly many among men who deny the meeting with their Lord (at the Resurrection)!

C3514. It is therefore all the more strange that there should be men who not only forget themselves but even **deny** that there is a return to Allah or an End or

Hereafter, when a full reckoning will be due for this period of probation.

They are asked to study past history, as in the next verse.

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

9. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the End of those before them?

... كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا...

They were superior to them in strength,

and they tilled the earth and populated it in greater numbers than these (pagans) have done,

... وَجَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ...

there came to them their apostles with Clear (Signs),

(which they rejected, to their own destruction):

C3515. Let not any generation think that it is superior to all that went before it. We may be "heirs to all the ages, in the foremost files of times." That is no reason for arrogance, but on the contrary adds to our responsibility.

When we realize what flourishing cities and kingdoms existed before, how they flourished in numbers and prosperity, what chances they were given, and how they perished when they disobeyed the law of Allah, we shall feel a sense of humility, and see that it was rebellion and self-will that brought them down. Allah was more than just. He was also merciful. But they brought about their own ruin.

... فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ (٩)

it was not Allah Who wronged them but they wronged their own souls.

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاؤُوا السُّوأَى...

10. In the long run evil in the extreme will be the End of those who do evil;

C3516. The Arabic superlative feminine, referring to the feminine noun **Aqibah,** I have translated by "Evil in the extreme".

In this life good and evil may seem to be mixed up, and it may be that somethings or persons that are evil get what seem to be good rewards or blessings, while the opposite happens to the good. But this is only a temporary appearance. In the long run Evil will have its own evil consequences, multiplied cumulatively. And this, because evil not only rejected Allah's Message of Good but laughed at Good and misled others.

... أَن كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ (١٠)

for that they rejected the Signs of Allah, and held them up to ridicule.

C3517. Nothing exists of its own accord or fortuitously. It is Allah Who originates all creation.

What appears to be death may be only transformation: for Allah can and does recreate. And His creative activity is continuous. Our death is but a phenomenal event. What we become after death is the result of a process of recreation by Allah, Who is both the source and the goal of all things.

When we are brought back to him, it will be as conscious and responsible beings, to receive the consequences of our brief life on this earth.

Section 2

... اللَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ

11. It is Allah Who begins (the process of) creation;
then repeats it;

... ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (١١)

then shall ye be brought back to Him.

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ (١٢)

12. On the Day that the Hour will be established, the guilty will be struck dumb with despair.

C3518. The Hour will be established: in due time the Hour will come when Judgment will be established, and the seeming disturbance of balance in this world will be redressed. Then the Good will rejoice, and the Guilty, faced with the Realities, will lose all their illusions and be struck dumb with despair.

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُم مِّن شُرَكَائِهِمْ شُفَعَاء...

13. No intercessor will they have among their "Partners,"

C3519. False worship will then appear in its true colors. Anything to which we offered the worship due to Allah alone, will vanish instead of being of any help.

Indeed the deluded false worshipers, whose eyes will now be opened, will themselves reject their falsehoods, as the Truth will now shine with unquestioned splendor.

... وَكَانُوا بِشُرَكَائِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ (١٣)

and they will (themselves) reject their "Partners."

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَفَرَّقُونَ (١٤)

14. On the Day that the Hour will be established, --

that Day shall (all men) be sorted out.

C3520. In the fullness of time good and evil will all **be sorted out** and separated.

- The good will reach their destination of felicity in rich and luscious, well-watered meadows, which stand as the type of all that is fair to see and pleasant to feel.
- The evil will no longer imagine that they are enjoying good fortune, for the testing time will be over, and the grim reality will stare them in the face.

They will receive their just Punishment. (R).

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَهُمْ فِي رَوْضَةٍ يُحْبَرُونَ (١٥)

15. Then those who have believed and worked righteous deeds, shall be made happy in a Mead of Delight.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ...

16. And those who have rejected Faith and falsely denied Our Signs and the meeting of the Hereafter,

... فَأُولَئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ (١٦)

such shall be brought forth to Punishment.

فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ (١٧)

17. So (give) glory to Allah, when ye reach eventide and when ye rise in the morning;

C3521. The special times for Allah's remembrance are so described as to include all our activities in life,

- when we rise early in the morning, and when we go to rest in the evening;
- when we are in the midst of our work, at the decline of the sun, and in the late afternoon.

It may be noted that these are all striking stages in the passage of the sun through our terrestrial day, as well as stages in our daily working lives.

On this are based the hours of the five canonical prayers afterwards prescribed in Madinah; viz.

- early morning before sunrise (Fajr);
- when the day begins to decline, just after noon (Zuhr);
- in the late afternoon, say midway between noon and sunset ('Asr); and
- the two evening prayers, one just after sunset (Maghrib); and the other after the evening twilight has all faded from the horizon, the hour indicated for rest and sleep ('Isha).

Cf. 11:114, n. 1616, n. 1617;

17:78-79, n. 2275;

20:130. n. 2655.

وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

18. Yea, to Him be praise, in the heavens and on earth;

... وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ (١٨)

and in the late afternoon and when the day begins to decline.

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ...

19. It is He Who brings out the living from the dead, and brings out the dead from the living,

C3522. Cf. 10:31.

From dead matter Allah's creative act produces life and living matter, and even science has not yet been able to explain the mystery of life.

Life and living matter again seem to reach maturity and again die, as we see every day. No material thing seems to have perpetual life. But again we see the creative process of Allah constantly at work, and the cycle of life and death seems to go on.

... وَيُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

and Who gives life to the earth after it is dead:

C3523. Cf. 2:164.

The earth itself, seemingly so inert, produces vegetable life at once from a single shower of rain, and in various ways sustains animal life.

Normally it seems to die in the winter in northern climates, and in a drought everywhere, and the spring revives it in all its glory.

Metaphorically many movements, institutions, organizations, seem to die and then to live again, all under the wonderful dispensation of Allah. So will our

personality be revived when we die on this earth, in order to reap the fruit of this our probationary life.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ (١٩) ...

and thus shall ye be brought out (from the dead).

C.181 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(30:20-40)

Allah's Signs are many, and so are His mysteries;
Yet each does point to His Unity, Goodness,
Power, and Mercy. There is none like
Unto Him. His teaching is one, and men
That split it up His standard Religion
Are but following their own lusts, Ungrateful
Are they to give part-worship to others,
When all worship and praise and glory
Are due to Him and Him alone,
In Whom we have our life and being!

Section 3

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَنتُم بَشَرٌ تَنتَشِرُونَ (٢٠)

20. Among His Signs is this, that He **created** you from dust; and then, behold, ye are men scattered (far and wide)!

C3524. Cf. 18:37 and n. 2379.

In spite of the lowly origin of man's body, Allah has given him a mind and soul by which he can almost compass the farthest reaches of Time and Space.

Is this not enough for a miracle or Sign?

From a physical point of view, see how man, a creature of dust, scatters himself over the furthest corners of the earth!

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا...

21. And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them,

C3525. This refers to the wonderful mystery of sex. Children arise out of the union of the sexes. And it is always the female sex that bring forth the offspring, whether female or male. And the father is as necessary as the mother for bringing forth daughters.

... وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُم مَّوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ...

and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts);

C3526. Cf. 7:189.

Unregenerate man is pugnacious in the male sex, but rest and tranquility are found in the normal relations of a father and mother dwelling together and bringing up a family.

A man's chivalry to the opposite sex is natural and Allah-given. The friendship of two men between each other is quite different in quality and temper from the feeling which unspoilt nature expects as between men and women. There is a special kind of love and tenderness between them. And as woman is the weaker vessel, that tenderness may from a certain aspect be likened to mercy, the protecting kindness which the strong should give to the weak.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١)

verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ...

22. And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors:

C3527. The variations in languages and colors may be viewed from the geographical aspect or from the aspect of periods of time.

All mankind were created of a single pair of parents; yet they have spread to different countries and climates and developed different languages and different shades of

complexions. And yet their basic unity remains unaltered. They feel in the same way, and are all equally under Allah's care.

Then there are the variations in time. Old languages die out and new ones are evolved. New conditions of life and thought are constantly evolving new words and expressions, new syntactical structures, and new modes of pronunciation. Even old races die, and new races are born.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالِمِينَ (٢٢)

verily in that are Signs for those who know.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ مَنَامُكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَابْتِغَاؤُكُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ...

23. And among His Signs is the sleep that ye take by night and by day, and the quest that ye (make for livelihood) out of His Bounty:

C3528. If we consider deeply, sleep and dreams, the refreshment we get from sleep to wakefulness as well as from wakefulness to sleep, as also the state of our thoughts and feelings and sub-conscious self in these conditions, are both wonderful and mysterious.

Normally we sleep by night and do our ordinary work "in quest of the Bounty of Allah" by day. But sleep and rest may come and be necessary by day, and we may have to work by night. And our work for our livelihood may pass by insensible transitions to our work or thought or service of a higher and spiritual kind.

These processes suggest a background of things which we know but vaguely, but which are as much miracles as other Signs of Allah.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ (٢٣)

verily in that are Signs for those who hearken.

C3529. From verse 20 to verse 25 are mentioned a series of Signs or Miracles, which should awaken our souls and lead us to true Reality if we try to understand Allah.

1. There is our own origin and destiny, which must necessarily be our subjective starting point: "I think; therefore I am":

   no particular exertion of our being is here necessary (30:20).

2. The first beginnings of social life arise through sex and love:

   see 4:1, and n. 506;

   to understand this in all its bearing, we must "reflect" (30:21).

3. The next point is to understand our diversities in speech, color, etc., arising from differences of climate and external conditions; yet there is unity beneath that diversity, which we shall realize by extended knowledge (30:22).

4. Next we turn to our psychological conditions, sleep, rest, visions, insight, etc.; here we want teaching and guidance, to which we must hearken (30:23).

5. Next, we must approach the higher reaches of spiritual hopes and fears, as symbolized by such subtle forces of nature as lightning and electricity, which may kill the foolish or bring prosperity in its train by rain and abundant harvest; to understand the highest spiritual hopes and fears so symbolized, we want the highest wisdom (30:24).

6. And lastly, we may become so transformed that we rise above all petty, worldly, ephemeral things:

   Allah calls to us and we rise, as from our dead selves to a Height which we can only describe as the Heaven of stability: here no human processes serve, for the Call of Allah Himself has come (30:25-27).

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ...

24. And among His Signs, He shows you the lightning, by way both of fear and of hope,

C3530. See last note, item 5. Cf. 13:12 .

To cowards lightning and thunder appear as terrible forces of nature:

lightning seems to kill and destroy where its irresistible progress is not assisted by proper lightning-conductors. But lightning is also a herald of rain-bearing clouds and showers that bring fertility and prosperity in their train.

This double aspect is also symbolical of spiritual fears and hopes, fears lest we may not be found receptive or worthy of the irresistible perspicuous Message of Allah, and hopes that we may receive it in the right spirit and be blessed by its mighty power of transformation to achieve spiritual well-being.

Note that the repetition of the phrase "gives life to the earth after it is dead" connects this verse, with verse 19 above; in other words, the Revelation, which we must receive with wisdom and understanding, is a Sign of Allah's own power and mercy, and is vouchsafed in order to safeguard our own final Future.

... وَيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَيُحْيِي بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

and He sends down rain from the sky and with it gives life to the earth after it is dead:

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٢٤)

verily in that are Signs for those who are wise.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَن تَقُومَ السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضُ بِأَمْرِهِ...

25. And among His Signs is this, that heaven and earth stand by His Command:

C3531. In the physical world, the sky and the earth, as we see them, stand unsupported, by the artistry of Allah. They bear witness to Allah, and in

- that our physical life depends on them,
- the earth for its produce and the sky for rain, the heat of the sun, and other phenomena of nature,
- they call to our mind our relation to Allah Who made them and us.

How can we then be so dense as not to realize that our higher Future, our Ma'ad, is bound up with the call and the mercy of Allah?

...ثُمَّ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ دَعْوَةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ إِذَا أَنتُمْ تَخْرُجُونَ (٢٥)

then when He calls you, by a single call, from the earth, behold, ye (straightway) come forth.

...وَلَهُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

26. To Him belongs every being that is in the heavens and on earth:

...كُلٌّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ (٢٦)

all are devoutly obedient to Him.

C3532. All nature in Creation not only obeys Allah, but devoutly obeys Him, i.e., glories in its privilege of service and obedience.

Why should we not do likewise?

It is part of our original unspoilt nature, and we must respond to it, as all beings do, by their very nature.

... وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ

27. It is He Who begins (the process of) creation;

C3533. Cf. 30:11 above, where the same phrase began the argument about the beginning and end of all things being with Allah.

This has been illustrated by reference to various Signs in Creation, and now the argument is rounded off with the same phrase.

... ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ...

then repeats it; and for Him it is most easy.

...وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَى فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

To Him belongs the loftiest similitude (We can think of) in the heavens and the earth:

C3534. Allah's glory and Allah's attributes are above any names we can give to them. Human language is not adequate to express them. We can only form some idea of them at our present stage by means of **Similitudes** and Parables.

But even so, the highest we can think of falls short of the true Reality. For Allah is higher and wiser than the highest and wisest we can think of.

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٧)

for He is Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom.

Section 4

ضَرَبَ لَكُم مَّثَلًا مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ ...

28. He does propound to you a similitude from your own (experience):

C3535. One way in which we can get some idea of the things higher than our own plane is to think of Parables and Similitudes drawn from our own lives and experience. And such a Similitude or Parable is offered to us now about false worship.

See next note.

...هَل لَّكُم مِّن مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُم مِّن شُرَكَاء فِي مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ...

do ye have partners among those whom your right hands possess, to share as equals in the wealth We have bestowed on you?

C3536. Allah is far higher above His Creation than any, the highest, of His creatures can be above any, the lowest, of His creatures. And yet would a man share his wealth on equal terms with his dependants?

Even what he calls his wealth is not really his own, but given by Allah. It is "his" in common speech by reason merely of certain accidental circumstances.

How then can men raise Allah's creatures to equality with Allah in worship?

...فَأَنتُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاء تَخَافُونَهُمْ كَخِيفَتِكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ...

Do ye fear them as ye fear each other?

C3537. Men fear each other as equals in a state of society at perpetual warfare. To remove this fear they appoint an authority among themselves

a King or sovereign authority whom they consider just

to preserve them from this fear and give them an established order.

But they must obey and revere this authority and depend upon this authority for their own tranquility and security.

Even with their equals there is always the fear of public opinion. But men do not fear, or obey, or revere those who are their slaves or dependents.

Man is dependent on Allah. And Allah is the Sovereign authority in an infinitely higher sense. He is in no sense dependent on us, but we must honor and revere Him and fear to disobey His Will or His Law.

"The fear of Allah is the beginning of wisdom."

...كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٢٨)

Thus do We explain the Signs in detail to a people that understand.

C3538. Cf. 6:55, and 7:32, 7:174. etc.

...بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَهْوَاءهُم بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ...

29. Nay, the wrongdoers (merely) fellow their own lusts, being devoid of knowledge.

...فَمَن يَهْدِي مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ...

But who will guide those whom Allah leaves astray?

C3539. The wrong-doers-those who deliberately reject Allah's guidance and break Allah's Law-have put themselves out of the region of Allah's mercy. In this they have put themselves outside the pale of the knowledge of what is for their own good. In such a case

they must suffer the consequences of the personal responsibility which flows from the grant of a limited free-will.

Who can then guide them or help them?

...وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٢٩)

To them there will be no helpers.

...فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا

30. So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith:

C3540. For **Hanif** see n. 134 to 2:135.

Here "true" is used in the sense in which we say, "the magnetic needle is true to the north."

Those who have been privileged to receive the Truth should never hesitate or swerve but remain constant, as men who know.

...فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا...

(Establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind:

...لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ...

no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah:

C3541. As turned out from the creative hand of Allah, man is innocent, pure, true, free, inclined to right and virtue, and endued with true understanding about his own position in the Universe and about Allah's goodness, wisdom, and power.

That is his true nature, just as the nature of a lamb is to be gentle and of a horse is to be swift.

But man is caught in the meshes of customs, superstitions, selfish desires, and false teaching. This may make him pugnacious, unclean, false, slavish, hankering after what is wrong or forbidden, and deflected from the love of his fellow-men and the pure worship of the One True God.

The problem before the Prophets is to cure this crookedness, and to restore human nature to what it should be under the Will of Allah.

... ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ ...

by Allah: that is the standard Religion:

C3542. In 9:36, I translated **Din Qaiyim** as "straight usage." Here the meaning is wider, as it includes the whole life, thoughts and desires of man.

The **"standard Religion,"** or the Straight Way is thus contrasted with the various human systems that conflict with each other and call themselves separate 'religions" or "sects" (see verse 32 below).

Allah's standard Religion is one, as God is One.

... وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٠)

but most among mankind understand not.

... مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوهُ

31. Turn ye back in repentance to Him, and fear Him:

C3543. "Repentance" does not mean sackcloth and ashes, or putting on a gloom pessimism.

It means giving up disease for health, crookedness (which is abnormal) for the Straight Way, the restoration of our nature as Allah created it from the falsity introduced by the enticements of Evil. To revert to the simile of the magnetic needle (n. 3540 above), if the needle is held back by obstructions, we must restore its freedom, so that it points true again to the magnetic pole.

... وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ...

establish regular prayers,

... وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٣١)

and be not ye among those who join gods with Allah, --

مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا...

32. Those who split up their Religion, and become (mere) Sects, --

...كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ (٣٢)

each party rejoicing in that which is with itself!

C3544. A good description of self-satisfied sectarianism as against real Religion.

See n. 3542 above.

وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُم مُّنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ...

33. When trouble touches men, they cry to their Lord, turning back to Him in repentance:

C3545. Cf. 10:12.

It is trouble, distress, or adversity that makes men realize their helplessness and turns their attention back to the true Source of all goodness and happiness.

But when they are shown special Mercy -often more than they deserve- they forget themselves and attribute it to their own cleverness, or to the stars, or to some false ideas to which they pay court and worship, either to the exclusion of Allah or in addition to the lip-worship which they pay to Allah.

Their action in any case amounts to gross ingratitude; but in the circumstances it looks as if they had gone out of their way to show ingratitude.

...ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَاقَهُم مِّنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُم بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ (٣٣)

but when He gives them a taste of Mercy as from Himself, behold, some of them pay part-worship to other gods besides their Lord. --

...لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ

34. (As if) to show their ingratitude for the (favors) We have bestowed on them!

...فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٤)

Then enjoy (your brief day); but soon will ye know (your folly).

C3546. Cf. 16:54.

They are welcome to their fancies and false worship, and to the enjoyment of the pleasures of this Life, but they will soon be disillusioned. Then they will realize the true values of the things they neglected and the things they cultivated.

...أَمْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا

35. Or have We sent down authority to them,

...فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يُشْرِكُونَ (٣٥)

which points out to them the things to which they pay part-worship?

C3547. Their behavior is exactly as if they were satisfied within themselves that they were entitled or given a license to worship God and Mammon.

In fact the whole thing is their own invention or delusion.

...وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا

36. When We give men a taste of Mercy, they exult thereat:

C3548. Cf. 30:33. In that passage the unreasonable behavior of men in sorrow and in affluence is considered with reference to their attitude to Allah: in distress they turn to Him, but in prosperity they turn to other things.

Here the contrast in the two situations is considered with reference to men's inner psychology:

- in affluence they are puffed up and unduly elated,
- and in adversity they lose all heart.

Both attitudes are wrong.

In prosperity men should realize that it is not their merits that deserve all the Bounty of Allah, but that it is given out of Allah's abundant generosity;

in adversity they should remember that their suffering is brought on by their own folly and sin, and humbly pray for Allah's grace and mercy, in order that they may be set on their feet again.

For, as the next verse points out, Allah gives opportunities, gifts, and the good things of life to every one, but in a greater or less measure, and at some time or other, according to His All-Wise Plan, which is the expression of His holy and benevolent Will.

...وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَقْنَطُونَ (٣٦)

and when some evil afflicts them because of what their (own) hands have sent forth, behold, they are in despair!

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ...

37. See they not that Allah enlarges the provision and restricts it, to whomsoever He pleases?

C3549. Cf. 28:82 and n. 3412. Also see last note.

Allah's grant of certain gifts to some, as well as His withholding of certain gifts from others, are themselves Signs (trials or warnings) to men of faith and understanding.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣٧)

Verily in that are Signs for those who believe.

فَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَى حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ...

38. So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer.

... ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ...

That is best for those who seek the Countenance, of Allah,

C3550. For **Wajh** (Face, Countenance), see n. 114 to 2:112.

Also see 6:52.

...وَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٣٨)

and it is they who will prosper.

C3551. In both this life and the next. See n. 29 to 2:5.

...وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن رِّبًا لِّيَرْبُوَ فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُو عِندَ اللَّهِ

39. That which ye lay out for increase through the property of (other) people, will have no increase with Allah:

C3552. Riba (literally 'usury' or 'interest') is prohibited, for the principle is that any profit which we should seek should be through our own exertions and at our own expense, not through exploiting other people or at their expense, however we may wrap up the process in the spacious phraseology of high finance or City jargon.

But we are asked to go beyond this negative precept of avoiding what is wrong. We should show our active love for our neighbor by spending of our own substance or resources or the utilization of our own talents and opportunities in the service of those who need them. Then our reward or recompense will not be merely what we deserve. It will be multiplied to many times more than our strict account.

According to Commentators this verse specially applies to those who give to others, whether gifts or services, in order to receive from them greater benefits in return. Such seemingly good acts are void of any merit and deserve no reward from Allah, since He knows the real intention behind such ostensibly good deeds. (R).

...وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن زَكَاةٍ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ (٣٩)

but that which ye lay out for charity, seeking the Countenance of Allah, (will increase): it is these who will get a recompense multiplied.

C3553. Seeking the **"Face" or "Countenance"** of Allah, i.e., out of our pure love for the true vision of Allah's own Self.

See also n. 3550 above.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ...

40. It is Allah Who has created you: further, He has provided for your sustenance;

then He will cause you to die; and again He will give you life.

...هَلْ مِن شُرَكَائِكُم مَّن يَفْعَلُ مِن ذَٰلِكُم مِّن شَيْءٍ...

Are there any of your (false) "Partners" who can do any single one of these things?

C3554. The persons or things or ideas to which we give part-worship, while our whole and exclusive worship is due to Allah, are the **"Partners"** we set up.

Do we owe our existence to them?

Do they sustain our being?

Can they take our life or give it back to us?

Certainly not.

Then how foolish of us to give them part-worship!

...سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٤٠)

Glory to Him! and High is He above the partners they attribute (to Him)!

C3555. Cf. x. 18 and similar passages.

C.182 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(30:41-60)

The result of Evil is Evil. So
Mischief spreads, but Allah will restore
The balance in the End. He did create
All things pure, and will purge and purify,
As He does the physical world with Winds.
Destruction awaits those that break
His Harmony and Law; it will come when least
Expected. Let the righteous wait and endure

With constancy, for Evil is shaky,
With no faith in itself and no roots,
And is doomed to perish utterly.

Section 5

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ...

41. Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned,

C3556. Allah's Creation was pure and good in itself. All the mischief or corruption was introduced by Evil, viz., arrogance, selfishness, etc. See n. 3541 to 30:30 above.

As soon as the mischief has come in, Allah's mercy and goodness step in to stop it.

The consequences of Evil must be evil, and this should be shown in such partial punishment as "the hands of men have earned," so that it may be a warning for the future and an invitation to enter the door of repentance.

لِيُذِيقَهُم بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٤١)...

that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil).

C3557. The ultimate object of Allah's justice and punishment is to reclaim man from Evil, and to restore him to the pristine purity and innocence in which he was created.

The Evil introduced by his possession of a limited free-will should be eliminated by the education and purification of man's own will. For, with his will and motives purified, he is capable of much greater heights than a creature not endowed with any free-will.

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلُ...

42. Say:

"Travel through the earth and see what was the End of those before (you):

...كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّشْرِكِينَ (٤٢)

most of them worshipped others besides Allah."

C3558. If you contemplate history and past experience (including spiritual experience), you will find that evil and corruption tended to destroy themselves, because they had false idols for worship, false standards of conduct, and false goals of desire.

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ الْقَيِّمِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ...

43. But set thou thy face to the right Religion, before there come from Allah the Day which there is no chance of averting:

C3559. We should recover the balance that has been upset by Evil and Falsehood before it is too late. For a Day will surely come when true values will be restored and all falsehood and evil will be destroyed.

Nothing but repentance and amendment can avert the consequences of Evil. When the Day actually comes, repentance will be too late: for the impassable barrier between Evil and Good will have been fixed, and the chance of return to Allah's pattern will have been lost.

...يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصَّدَّعُونَ (٤٣)

on that Day shall men be divided (in two).

C3560. The sharp division will then have been accomplished between the unfortunate ones who rejected Truth and Faith and will suffer for their rejection, and the righteous who will attain Peace and Salvation: see next verse.

Note that the state of the Blessed will not be merely a passive state. They will actively earn and contribute to their own happiness.

مَن كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ...

44. Those who reject Faith will suffer from that rejection:

...وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِأَنفُسِهِمْ يَمْهَدُونَ (٤٤)

and those who work righteousness will spread their couch (of repose) for themselves (in heaven):

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

45. That He may reward those who believe and work righteous deeds, out of His Bounty:

C3561. Though the repose and bliss will have been won by the righteous by their own efforts, it must not be supposed that their own merits were equal to the reward they will earn.

What they will get will be due to the infinite Grace and Bounty of Allah.

...إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ (٤٥)

for He loves not those who reject Faith.

C3562. In form this clause is (here as elsewhere) negative, but it has a positive meaning:

Allah loves those who have faith and trust in Him, and will, out of His Grace and Bounty, reward them in abundant measure.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَن يُرْسِلَ الرِّيَاحَ مُبَشِّرَاتٍ...

46. Among His Signs is this, that He sends the Winds, as heralds of Glad Tidings,

C3563. The theme of Allah's artistry in the physical and the spiritual world was placed before us above in 30:20-27.

Then, in verse 28-40, we were shown how man and nature were pure as they came out of the hand of Allah, and how we must restore this purity in order to fulfill the Will and Plan of Allah.

Now we are told how the restorative and purifying agencies are sent by Allah Himself, in both the physical and the spiritual world.

...وَلِيُذِيقَكُم مِّن رَّحْمَتِهِ...

giving you a taste of His (Grace and) Mercy, --

C3564. Cf. 7:57 and n. 1036 and 25:48 and n. 3104.

...وَلِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلْكُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ...

that the ships may sail (majestically) by His Command and that ye may seek of His Bounty:

C3565. In the physical world, the winds not only cool and purify the air, and bring the blessings of rain, which fertilizes the soil, but they help international commerce and intercourse among men through sea-ways and now by air-ways.

Those who know how to take advantage of these blessings of Allah prosper and rejoice, while those who ignore or fail to understand these Signs perish in storms.

So in the spiritual world: heralds of glad tidings were sent by Allah in the shape of Messengers: those who profited by their Message prospered and those who ignored or opposed the Clear Signs perished, see next verse.

...وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٤٦)

in order that ye may be grateful.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِمْ...

47. We did indeed send, before thee, apostles to their (respective) peoples,

...فَجَاؤُوهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ...

and they came to them with Clear Signs:

... فَانتَقَمْنَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا...

then, to those who transgressed, We meted out Retribution:

...وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٧)

and it was due from us to aid those who believed.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَاحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا...

48. It is Allah Who sends the Winds, and they raise the Clouds:

C3566. Again the Parable of the **Winds** is presented from another aspect, both physical and spiritual.

In the physical world, see their play with the Clouds:

how they suck up the moisture from terrestrial water, carry it about in dark clouds as needed, and break it up with rain as needed.

So Allah's wonderful Grace draws up men's spiritual aspirations from the most unlikely places and suspends them as dark mysteries, according to His holy Will and Plan: and when His Message reaches the hearts of men even in the smallest fragments, how its recipients rejoice, even though before it, they were in utter despair!

...فَيَبْسُطُهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ...

then does He spread them in the sky as He wills,

...وَيَجْعَلُهُ كِسَفًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ...

and break them into fragments, until thou seest rain-drops issue from the midst thereof:

...فَإِذَا أَصَابَ بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ...

then when He has made them reach such of his servants as He wills,

C3567. See last note.

... إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٤٨)

behold, they do rejoice!

وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلِ أَن يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِم مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَمُبْلِسِينَ (٤٩)

49. Even though, before they received (the rain) -- just before this -- they were dumb with despair!

فَانظُرْ إِلَى آثَارِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

50. Then contemplate (O man!) the memorials of Allah's Mercy! -- how He gives life to the earth after its death:

C3568. After the two Parables about the purifying action of the Winds and their fertilizing action, we now have the Parable of the earth that dies in winter or drought and lives again in spring or rain, by Allah's Grace:

so in the spiritual sphere, man may be dead and may live again by the Breath of Allah and His Mercy if she will only place himself in Allah's hands.

...إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ...

verily the Same will give life to the men who are dead:

...وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٥٠)

for He has power over all things.

وَلَئِنْ أَرْسَلْنَا رِيحًا فَرَأَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَّظَلُّوا مِن بَعْدِهِ يَكْفُرُونَ (٥١)

51. And if We (but) send a Wind from which they see (their tilth) turn yellow, behold, they become, thereafter, ungrateful (Unbelievers)!

C3569. Another Parable from the forces of nature.

We saw how the Winds gladdened, vivified, and enriched those who utilized them in the right spirit. But a wind might be destructive to tilth in certain circumstances: so the blessings of Allah may-by the wrongdoers resisting and blaspheming-bring punishment to the wrongdoers. Instead of taking the punishment in the right spirit-in the spirit in which Believers of Allah take their misfortunes,- the Unbelievers curse and deepen their sin!

فَإِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ (٥٢)

52. So verily thou canst not make the dead to hear, nor canst thou make the deaf to hear the call, when they show their backs and turn away.

C3570. The marvels of Allah's creation can be realized in a general way by every one who has a disposition to allow such knowledge to penetrate his mind.

But if men, out of perversity, kill the very faculties which Allah has given them, how can they then understand?

Besides the men who deaden their spiritual sense, there are men who may be likened to the deaf, who lack one faculty but to whom an appeal can be made through

other faculties. such as the sense of sight; but if they turn their backs and refuse to be instructed at all. how can the Truth reach them?

وَمَا أَنتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمْيِ عَن ضَلَالَتِهِمْ...

53. Nor canst thou lead back the blind from their straying:

C3571. See last note.

Then there is the case of men about whom the saying holds true, that none are so blind as those who will not see. They prefer to stray in paths of wrong and of sense-pleasures. How can they be guided in any way?

The only persons who gain by spiritual teaching are those who bring a mind to it-who believe and submit their wills to Allah's Will.

This is the central doctrine of Islam.

...إِن تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُم مُّسْلِمُونَ (٥٣)

only those wilt thou make to hear, who believe in Our Signs and submit (their wills in Islam).

Section 6

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن ضَعْفٍ...

54. It is Allah Who created you in a state of (helpless) weakness,

... ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِن بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً...

then gave (you) strength after weakness,

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِن بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً...

then, after strength, give (you) weakness and a hoary head:

C3572. What was said before about the people who make Allah's teaching of "of none effect" does not mean that Evil will defeat Allah. On the contrary we are asked to contemplate the mysteries of Allah's wisdom with another Parable.

In our physical life we see how strength is evolved out of weakness and weakness out of strength. The helpless babe becomes a lusty man in the pride of his manhood, and then sinks to a feeble old age: and yet there is wisdom in all these stages in the Universal Plan. So Allah carries out His Plan in this world **"as He wills"**, i.e., according to His Will and Plan, and none can gainsay it. And His Plan is wise and can never be frustrated.

...يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاء وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْقَدِيرُ (٥٤)

He creates as He wills, and it is He Who has all knowledge and power.

...وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ

55. On the Day that the Hour (of reckoning) will be established, the transgressors will swear that they tarried not but an hour:

C3573. Whatever the seeming inequalities may be now-when the good appear to be weak and the strong seem to oppress-will be removed when the balance will be finally redressed.

That will happen in good time,-indeed so quickly that the Transgressors will be taken by Surprise. They were deluded by the fact that what they took to be their triumph or their freedom to do what they liked was only a reprieve, a "Term Appointed", in which they could repent and amend and get Allah's Mercy. Failing this, they will then be up against the Penalties which they thought they had evaded or defied.

...كَذَلِكَ كَانُوا يُؤْفَكُونَ (٥٥)

thus were they used to being deluded!

...وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْإِيمَانَ

56. But those endued with knowledge and faith will say:

...لَقَدْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ... ...

"Indeed ye did tarry, within Allah's Decree, to the Day of Resurrection,

C3574. The men of knowledge and faith knew all along of the true values-of the things of this ephemeral life and the things that will endure and face them at the End,- unlike the wrong-doers who were content with falsehoods and were taken by surprise, like ignorant men, when they faced the Realities.

...فَهَٰذَا يَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ وَلَٰكِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٥٦)

and this is the Day of Resurrection: but ye -- ye were not aware!"

...فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يَنفَعُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ

57. So on that Day no excuse of theirs will avail the Transgressors,

C3575. It will be no use for those who deliberately rejected the clearest warnings in Allah's Message to say: "Oh we did not realize this!"

The excuse will be false, and it would be unreasonable to suppose that they would then be asked to seek Grace by repentance. It will then be too late.

...وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ (٥٧)

nor will they be invited (then) to seek grace (by repentance).

...وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ

58. Verily We have propounded for men, in this Qur'án, every kind of Parable:

...وَلَئِن جِئْتَهُم بِآيَةٍ لَّيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا مُبْطِلُونَ (٥٨)

but if thou bring to them any Sign, the Unbelievers are sure to say,

"Ye do nothing but talk vanities."

C3576. Things of the highest moment have been explained in the Quran from various points of view. as in this Surah itself, by means of payables and similitudes drawn from nature and from our ordinary daily life.

But whatever the explanation, however convincing it may he to men who earnestly seek after Truth, those who deliberately turn their backs to Truth can find

nothing convincing. In their eyes the explanations are mere "vain talk" or false arguments.

كَذَٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٩)

59. Thus does Allah seal up the hearts of those who understand not.

C3577. When an attitude of obstinate resistance to Truth is adopted, the natural consequence (by Allah's Law) is that the heart and mind get more and more hardened with every act of deliberate rejection.

It becomes more and more impervious to the reception of Truth, just as a sealed envelope is unable to receive any further letter or message after it is sealed.

Cf. also 2:7 and n. 31.

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

60. So patiently persevere: for verily the promise of Allah is true:

...وَلَا يَسْتَخِفَّنَّكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُوقِنُونَ (٦٠)

nor let those shake thy firmness, who have (themselves) no certainty of faith.

C3578. The Prophet of Allah does not slacken in his efforts or feel discouraged because the Unbelievers laugh at him or persecute him or even seem to succeed in blocking his Message.

He has firm faith, and he knows that Allah will finally establish His Truth. He goes on in his divinely entrusted task, with patience and perseverance, which must win against the levity of his opponents, who have no faith or certainty at all to sustain them. (R).

وَمَن يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ

Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul:

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Luqman

لُقْمَانَ

Introduction and Summary

The argument of the Final End of Things is here continued from another point of view.

What is Wisdom?

Where shall it be found?

Will it solve the mysteries of Time, and Nature, and that world higher than physical Nature, which brings us nearer to Allah?

"Yes," is the answer; "If, as in the advice of Luqman the Wise, human wisdom looks to Allah in true worship, ennobles every

act of life with true kindness, but avoids the false indulgence that infringes the divine law-and in short follows the golden mean of virtue."

And this is indicated by every Sign in nature.

The chronology of the Surah has no significance. In the main, it belongs to the late Makkan period.

Summary- The earnest seekers after righteousness receiver guidance, unlike the seekers after vanity, who perish; all Creation bears witness to this; Wisdom, as expounded by Luqman the Wise, is true service to Allah, and consists in moderation (31:1-19, and C. 183).

The Wisdom is firm and enduring, and discerns Allah's Law in the working of His Creation; it looks to the Final End of Things, whose mystery is only known to Allah (31:20-34, and C. 184).

C.183 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(31:1-19)

What is the Book of Wisdom? It is
A Guide and Mercy to men, and teaches
Them how to attain Bliss, Allah's Mercies
Are infinite: how can man deny them?
Luqman the Wise taught grateful worship
Of the One True God, and the service of men.
Beginning with Parents; every good deed
Is known to Allah and is brought to account.
So walk in the Golden Mean, and serve
Him with constancy and firmness of purpose.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم (١)

1. Alif Lam Mim.

C3579. See n. 25 to 2:1 and Introduction to Surah 30.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢)

2. These are Verses of the Wise Book, --

C3580. This Surah relates to Wisdom, and the Quran is appropriately called the Wise Book, or the Book of Wisdom.

In verse 12 below there is a reference to Luqman the Wise. "Wise" in this sense (Hakim) means not only a man versed in knowledge human and divine, but one carrying out in practical conduct ('amal) the right course in life to the utmost of his power.

His knowledge is correct and practical, but not necessarily complete: for no man is perfect.

Such an ideal involves the conception of a man of heroic action as well as of deep and workman-like knowledge of nature and human nature,-not merely dreams or speculation. That ideal was fulfilled in a most remarkable degree in the holy Prophet, and in the sacred Book which was revealed through him. **"The Wise Book" (Kilab-ul-haklm)** is one of the titles of the Quran.

هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّلْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣)

3. A Guide and a Mercy to the Doers of Good, --

C3581. A guide to all, and, to those who accept its guidance, a source of mercy as leading them to Salvation.

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُم بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ (٤)

4. Those who

- establish regular Prayer,

- and give regular Charity,
- and have (in their hearts) the assurance of the Hereafter.

C3582. The righteous are distinguished here by three marks, which are summed up in the phrase "doers of good", viz.:

1. they yearn towards Allah in duty, love, and prayer,
2. they love and serve their fellow-men in charity,
3. they win peace and rest for themselves in the assured hope of the Future.

أُوْلَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

5. These are on (true) guidance from their Lord;

C3583. They get these blessings because they submit their will to Allah's Will and receive His guidance. They will do well in this life (from the highest standpoint) and they will reach their true Goal in the Future.

...وَأُوْلَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٥)

and these are the ones who will prosper.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ...

6. But there are, among men, those who purchase idle tales,

C3584. Life is taken seriously by men who realize the issues that hang upon it. But there are men of a frivolous turn of mind who prefer idle tales to true Realities and they are justly rebuked here.

In the time of the holy Prophet there was a pagan Nadr ibn al Harith who preferred Persian romances to the Message of Allah, and turned away ignorant men from the preaching of Allah's Word.

...لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا...

without knowledge (or meaning), to mislead (men) from the Path of Allah and throw ridicule (on the Path):

...أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (٦)

for such there will be a humiliating Penalty.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا وَلَّى مُسْتَكْبِرًا...

7. When Our Signs are rehearsed to such a one, he turns away in arrogance,

C3585. Such men behave as if they had heard nothing of serious import, or laugh at serious teaching. The loss will be their own. They will miss the higher things of life and be left out of Allah's blessings.

Ignorance and arrogance are in most cases the causes of their fall.

...كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا...

as if he heard them not,

...كَأَنَّ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا...

as if there were deafness in both his ears:

...فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٧)

announce to him a grievous Penalty.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ النَّعِيمِ (٨)

8. For those who believe and work righteous deeds, there will be Gardens of Bliss. --

...خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

9. To dwell therein.

...وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا...

The promise of Allah is true:

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٩)

and He is Exalted in power, Wise.

C3586. He is Exalted in power, and can carry out His Will, and nothing can stop the carrying out of His promise.

He is also infinitely **Wise:** His promise is therefore full of meaning: it is not merely without purpose: it has a place in the Universal Plan.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا...

10. He created the heavens without any pillars that ye can see;

C3587. Cf. 13:2 and n. 1800.

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ...

He set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with you;

C3588. Cf. 16:15 and n. 2038.

وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ...

and He scattered through it beasts of all kinds.

C3589. Cf. 2:164 and n. 166.

وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاء ...

We send down rain from the sky,

C3590. Note the change of the pronoun at this stage in the verse.

Before this, Allah was spoken of in the third person, "He", and the acts of Creation referred to were acts that in the main were completed when the universe as we see it came into being, though its slow age-long evolution continues.

After this, Allah speaks in the first person "We" the plural of honor, as explained before (see n. 56 to 2:38); and the processes spoken of are those that go on continually before us, as in the case of rain and the growth of the vegetable kingdom.

In some way the creation of the heavens and the earth and animal life on it may be considered impersonal to man, while the processes of rain and vegetation may be considered in special personal relationship to him.

... فَأَنبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ (١٠)

and produce on the earth every kind of noble creature, in pairs.

C3591. I think that sex life in plants is referred to, as in 13:3, where see n. 1804, though the pairs here may refer to animals also.

"Noble" (karim) may refer to the more beneficent plants and trees (and animals), which Allah has created for man's use.

هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ...

11. Such is the Creation of Allah:

...فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ...

now show Me what is there that others besides Him have created:

C3592. The transition from "We" in the last verse to **"Me"** in this verse means a still more personal relation to Allah: (see n. 56 to 2:38): as we are now asked about the true worship of Allah, as against the false worship of others besides Allah.

...بَلِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (١١)

nay,

but the Transgressors are in manifest error.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ...

12. We bestowed (in the past) wisdom on Luqman: "Show (thy) gratitude to Allah."

C3593. The sage Luqman, after whom this Surah is called, belongs to Arab tradition. Very little is known of his life. He is usually associated with a long life, and his title is **Mu'ammar** (the long-lived). He is referred by some to the age of the 'Ad people, for whom see n. 1040 to 7:65. He is the type of perfect wisdom.

It is said that he belonged to a humble station in life, being a slave or a carpenter, and that he refused worldly power and a kingdom.

Many instructive apologies are credited to him, similar to ,'Esop'e Fables in Greek tradition. The identification of Luqman and Aesop has no historical foundation, though it is true that the traditions about them have influenced each other.

...وَمَن يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ...

Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul:

...وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ (١٢)...

but if any is ungrateful, verily Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

C3594. Cf. 14:8.

The basis of the moral Law is man's own good, and not any benefit to Allah, for Allah is above all needs, and **"worthy of all praise"**; i.e.,

> even in praising Him, we do not advance His glory. When we obey His Will, we bring our position into conformity with our own nature as made by Him.

...وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ...

13. Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction:

C3595. Luqman is held up as a pattern of wisdom, because he realized the best in a wise life in this world, as based upon the highest Hope in the inner life.

To him, as in Islam, true human wisdom is also divine wisdom: the two cannot be separated. The beginning of all wisdom, therefore,

- is conformity with the Will of Allah (31:12). That means that we must understand our relations to Him and worship Him aright (31:13).
- Then we must be good to mankind, beginning with our own parents (31:14).

- For the two duties are not diverse, but one. Where they appear to conflict, there is something wrong with the human will (see n. 3597).

...يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ...

"O my son!

Join not in worship (others) with Allah:

...إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٣)

for false worship is indeed the highest wrongdoing."

...وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ...

14. And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents:

...حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ...

in travail upon travail did his mother bear him,

...وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ...

and in years twain was his weaning:

C3596. The set of milk teeth in a human child is completed at the age of two years, which is therefore the natural extreme limit for breast-feeding.

In our artificial life the duration is much less.

...أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ...

(hear the command),

"Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents:

...إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ (١٤)

to Me is (thy final) Goal.

... وَإِن جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَى أَن تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ

15. "But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge,

C3597. Where the duty to man conflicts with the duty to Allah, it means that there is something wrong with the human will, and we should obey Allah rather than man.

But even here, it does not mean that we should be arrogant or insolent. To parents and those in authority, we must be kind, considerate, and courteous, even where they command things which we should not do and therefore disobedience becomes our highest duty.

The worship of things other than Allah is the worship of false things, things which are alien to our true knowledge, things that go against our own pure nature as created by Allah.

... فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا...

obey them not;

...وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا...

yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration),

...وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ...

and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love):

C3598. In any apparent conflict of duties our standard should be Allah's Will, as declared to us by His command.

That is the way of those who love Allah: and their motive in disobedience to parents or human authority where disobedience is necessary by Allah's Law is not self willed rebellion or defiance, but love of Allah, which means the true love of man in the highest sense of the word.

And the reason we should give is:

> "Both you and I have to return to Allah; therefore not only must I follow Allah's Will, but you must command nothing against Allah's Will."

...ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ...

in the End the return of you all is to Me,

... فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٥)

and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did."

C3599. These conflicts may appear to us strange and puzzling in this life. But in Allah's Presence we shall see their real meaning and significance.

- It may be that that was one way in which our true mettle could be tested: for it is not easy to disobey and love man at the same time.

... يَا بُنَيَّ

16. "O my son!" (said Luqman),

C3600. Verses 14-15 are not the direct speech of Luqman but flow by way of commentary on his teaching.

He was speaking as a father to his son, and he could not very well urge respect for himself and draw the son's attention to the limitations of filial obedience.

These verses may be supposed to be general directions flowing from Luqman's teaching to men, and not directed to his son; though in either case, as Luqman got wisdom from Allah, it is divine principles that are enunciated.

... إِنَّهَا إِن تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُن فِي صَخْرَةٍ...

"If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock,

C3601. The **mustard-seed** is proverbially a small, minute thing, that people may ordinarily pass by. Not so Allah.

...أَوْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ...

or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth:

Further emphasis is laid by supposing the mustard-seed to be hidden beneath a rock or in the cleft of a rock, or to be lost in the spacious expanse of the earth or of the heavens. To Allah everything is known, and He will bring it forth, i.e., take account of it.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ (١٦)

for Allah understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them).

C3602. For Latif as a title applied to Allah, see n. 2844 to 22:63.

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ...

17. "O my son!

- establish regular prayer,

...وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ... ...

- enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong:

...وَاصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَكَ...

- and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee;

...إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (١٧)

for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا...

18. - "And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth;

C3603. The word **"cheek"** in English, too, means arrogance or effrontery, with a slightly different shade added, viz.: effrontery from one in an inferior position to one in a superior position.

The Arabic usage is wider, and includes smug self-satisfaction and a sense of lofty Superiority.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (١٨)

for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster.

وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِن صَوْتِكَ...

19. - "And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice;

C3604. The "Golden Mean" is the pivot of the philosophy of Luqman as it is of the philosophy of Aristotle and indeed of Islam. And it flows naturally from a true

understanding of our relation to Allah and His universe and to our fellow-creatures, especially man.

In all things **be moderate**.

- Do not go the pace, and do not be stationary or slow.
- Do not be talkative and do not be silent.
- Do not be loud and do not be timid or half-hearted.
- Do not be too confident, and do not be cowed down.

If you have patience,

- it is to give you constancy and determination, that you may bravely carry on the struggle of life.

If you have humility,

- it is to save you from unseemly swagger, not to curb your right spirit and your reasoned determination.

إِنَّ أَنكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ (١٩)...

for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass."

C.184 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(31:20-34)

True Wisdom sees Allah's boundless Bounties
To man, and how all nature is made
To serve man's ends. It is due from us
To know our place, discern the limits
Of our knowledge, and see how far above us
Is Allah's Wisdom, and His Law. Let us not
Describe ourselves. The end of all things
Will come, but the When and the How are known
To Allah alone, to Whom be all Praise!

Section 3

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

20. Do ye not see that Allah has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth,

C3605. Allah's Creation is independent of man. But Allah, in His infinite mercy, has given man the faculty to subdue the forces of nature and to penetrate through high mysteries with his powers of reason and insight.

But this is not merely a question of power. For in His Universal Plan, all are safeguarded. But man's destiny, as far as we can see, is noble to the highest degree.

...وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً ...

and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen?

C3606. Allah's grace and bounties work for us at all times. Sometimes we see them, and sometimes we do not.

In things which we can apprehend with our senses, we can see Allah's grace, but even in them, sometimes it works beyond the sphere of our knowledge. In the inner or spiritual world, sometimes, when our vision is clear, we can see it working, and often we are not conscious of it. But it works all the same.

...وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ

مُّنِيرٍ (٢٠)

Yet there are among men those who dispute about Allah, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them!

C3607. Such men lack knowledge, as they make no use of their intellects but are swayed by their passions; they lack guidance, as they are impatient of control; and the fruits of revelation, or spiritual insight, do not reach them, as they reject Faith and Revelation.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا...

21. When they are told to follow the (revelation) that Allah has sent down, they say:

...بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءنَا...

"Nay, we shall follow the ways that we found our fathers (following)."

C3608. They do not realize that in the spiritual world, as in the physical world, there is constant progress for the live ones: they are spiritually dead, as they are content to stand on ancestral ways, many of them evil, and leading to perdition.

...أَوَلَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (٢١)

What! even if it is Satan beckoning them to the Penalty of the (Blazing) Fire!

وَمَن يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى...

22. Whoever submits his whole self to Allah, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy hand-hold:

C3609. Cf. 2:256 and n. 301.

...وَإِلَى اللَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ (٢٢)

and with Allah rests the End and Decision of (all) affairs.

C3610. Cf. 22:41.

Everything goes back to Allah. He is our final Goal, as He is the final Goal of all things.

وَمَن كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزُنكَ كُفْرُهُ...

23. But if any reject Faith, let not his rejection grieve thee:

...إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا...

to Us is their return, and We shall tell them the truth of their deeds:

C3611. The man of God should not grieve because people reject Faith. He should do his duty and leave the rest to Allah. Every soul must return to Allah for his

reckoning. Allah knows everything, and His Universal Plan is full of wisdom.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٢٣)

for Allah knows well all that is in (men's) hearts.

... نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيلًا

24. We grant them their pleasure for a little while:

C3612. Cf. 2:126.

The respite in this life is of short duration. The ultimate Penalty of Evil is such as cannot be quenched.

Cf. 14:17. It will be too late then to repent.

... ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ إِلَى عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (٢٤)

in the end shall We drive them to a chastisement unrelenting.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ...

25. If thou ask them, who it is that created the heavens and the earth,

C3613. Cf 23:84-89, and 29:61 and n. 3493.

Men will acknowledge that Allah created the heavens and the earth, and yet fail to understand the love and goodness of Allah in continuing to cherish and maintain them with His gifts.

Even if they allow this, they sometimes yet fall short of the corollary, that He is the only One to be worshipped, and run after their own false gods in the shapes of their fancies and lusts. They do not do the duties which, if they rightly understood their own nature and position, they should take a delight in doing.

...لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ...

they will certainly say, "Allah."

C3614. This ejaculation expresses our satisfaction that at least this is recognized, that the Creator of the whole world is Allah.

It is a pity that they do not go further and recognize other facts and duties (see the last note).

...قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ...

Say: "Praise be to Allah!"

...بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٥)

But most of them understand not.

...لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

26. To Allah, belong all things in heaven and earth:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٦)

verily Allah is He (that is) free of all wants, worthy of all praise.

C3615. Cf. above, 31:12. There was begun the argument about showing gratitude to Allah, introducing Luqman's teaching and philosophy.

Such gratitude is shown by our understanding His love and doing our duty to Him by serving our fellow-men. For Allah Himself is Free from all wants and is in no way dependent on our service.

That argument has been illustrated in various ways. But now we are told that it can never be completed, for no human tongue or human resources can be adequate either to praise him or to expound His Word.

وَلَوْ أَنَّمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِن شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ

أَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ...

27. And if all the trees on earth were pens and the Ocean (were ink), with seven Oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the Words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing):

C3616. "Words of Allah": his wonderful Signs and Commandments are infinite and cannot be expressed if all the trees were made into pens, and all the wide Ocean, multiplied seven times, were made into ink.

Any Book of His Revelation would deal with matters which man can understand and use in his life: there are things that man can never fathom. Nor would any praise that we could write with infinite resources be adequate to describe His power, glory, and wisdom.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٧)

for Allah is Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom.

...مَّا خَلْقُكُمْ وَلَا بَعْثُكُمْ إِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ

28. And your creation or your resurrection is in no wise but as an individual soul:

C3617. Allah's greatness and infinitude are such that He can create and cherish not only a whole mass, but each individual soul, and He can follow its history and doings until the final Judgment.

This shows not only Allah's glory and Omniscience and Omnipotence: it also shows the value of each individual soul in His eyes, and lifts individual responsibility right up into relations with Him.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ (٢٨)

for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things).

...أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ

29. Seest thou not that Allah merges Night into Day and He merges Day into Night;

C3618. Cf. 22:61 and n. 2841.

Even when we can form a conception of Allah's infinitude by His dealings with each individual in His Creation as in verse 28 above, it is still inadequate.

What is an individual himself?

What is his relation to the universal Laws of Allah?

In outer nature we can see that there is no clear-cut line between night and day: each merges into the other. Yet the sun and moon obey definite laws. Though they seem

to go on for ever, yet their existence and duration themselves are but an atom in Allah's great universe.

How much more **"merging"** and imperceptible gradation there is in the inner and spiritual world?

Our actions themselves cannot be classified and ticketed and labeled when examined in relation to motives and circumstances. Yet they are like an open book before Allah.

...وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

that He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His Law), each running its course for a term appointed:

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٢٩)

and that Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do?

...ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ الْبَاطِلُ...

30. That is because Allah is the (only) Reality, and because whatever else they invoke besides Him is Falsehood;

C3619. Cf. 22:62 and note 2842 and 2843.

All the wonderful complexities, gradations, and nuances, that we find in Creation, are yet blended in one harmonious whole, that obeys Law and exemplifies Order.

They therefore point to the One True God. He is the only Eternal Reality.

...وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ (٣٠)

and because Allah, -- He is the Most High, Most Great.

Anything put up in competition or equality with Him is only Falsehood. For He is higher and greater than anything we can imagine. (R).

Section 4

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لِيُرِيَكُم مِّنْ آيَاتِهِ...

31. Seest thou not that the ships sail through the Ocean by the grace of Allah? -- that He may show you of His Signs?

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (٣١)

Verily in this are Signs for all who constantly persevere and give thanks.

C3620. Even the things that man makes are, as using the forces of Nature, evidence of the grace of Allah, Who has subdued these wonderful forces to the use of man.

But this gift of mastery can only be understood and appreciated by constant perseverance, combined with a recognition of the divine gifts **("giving thanks")**.

Sabbar is an intensive form from **sabr** and I have indicated it by the adverb "constantly".

وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُم مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ...

32. When a wave covers them like the canopy (of clouds), they call to Allah, offering Him sincere devotion.

C3621. Cf. 7:29. Unlike the people mentioned in the last verse, who constantly seek Allah's help and give thanks for His mercies by using them aright and doing their duty, there is a class of men whose worship is merely inspired by terror.

When they are in physical danger-the only kind of danger they appreciate,-e.g. in a storm at sea, they genuinely think of Allah. But once the danger is past, they become indifferent or wish to appear good while dallying with evil. See next verse.

...فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُم مُّقْتَصِدٌ...

But when He has delivered them safely to land, there are among them those that halt between (right and wrong).

C3622. They halt between two opinions.

- They are not against good, but they will not eschew evil.
- They are a contrast to those who "constantly persevere and give thanks".

But such an attitude amounts really to "perfidious ingratitude".

...وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ (٣٢)

But none reject Our Signs except only a perfidious ungrateful (wretch)!

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ...

33. O mankind! do your duty to your Lord,

...وَاخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَن وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَن وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا...

and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father.

C3623. On the Day of Reckoning no one can help another. The most loving father cannot help his son or be a substitute for him, and vice versa. Each will have his own personal responsibilities.

...إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

Verily, the promise of Allah is true:

...فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ...

let not then this present life deceive you

... وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ (٣٣)

nor let the Chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.

C3624. The **Chief Deceiver** is Satan.

It may make us forget that Time is fleeting and delude us by suggesting that the Reckoning may not come, whereas it is certain to come, because Allah's promise is true.

We must not play with Time nor be deceived by appearances. The Day may come to-day or to-morrow or when we least expect it.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ...

34. Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone).

...وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ...

It is He Who sends down rain,

...وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ...

and He Who knows what is in the wombs.

C3625. The question of Knowledge or Mystery governs both clauses here, viz.:

- Rain and
- Wombs.

In fact it governs all the five things mentioned in this verse: viz.

- the Hour;
- Rain;
- the Birth of a new Life (Wombs);
- our Physical Life from day to day;
- our Death.

See n. 3627 below.

As regards **Rain** we are asked to contemplate how and when it is sent down.

The moisture may be sucked up by the sun's heat in the Arabian Sea or the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean near East Africa, or in the Lake Region in Central Africa. The winds drive it hither and thither across thousands of miles, or it may be, only short distances. "The wind bloweth where it listeth."

No doubt it obeys certain physical Laws established by Allah, but how these Laws are interlocked, one with another! Meteorology, gravity, hydrostatics and dynamics, climatology, hygrometry, and a dozen other sciences are involved, and no man can completely master all of them, and yet this relates to only one of the millions of facts in physical nature, which are governed by Allah's Knowledge and Law.

The whole vegetable kingdom is primarily affected by Rain.

The mention of **Wombs** brings in the mystery of animal Life, Embryology, Sex, and a thousand other things. Who can tell-to take man alone-how long it will remain in the womb, whether it will be born alive, what sort of a new individual it will be,-a blessing or a curse to its parents, or to Society?

...وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا...

Nor does anyone know what it is that he will earn on the morrow:

C3626. "Earn" here, as elsewhere, means not only "earn one's livelihood" in a physical sense, but also to reap the consequences (good or ill) of one's conduct generally.

The whole sentence practically means;

"no man knows what the morrow may bring forth."

...وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ...

nor does anyone know in what land he is to die.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (٣٤)

Verily with Allah is full knowledge and He is acquainted (with all things).

C3627. See the five Mysteries summed up in n. 3625 above.

The argument is about the mystery of Time and Knowledge. We are supposed to know things in ordinary life.

But what does that knowledge amount to in reality?

Only a superficial acquaintance with things. And Time is even more uncertain.

In the case of rain, which causes vegetable life to spring up, or in the case of new animal life, can we answer with precision questions as to When or How or Wherefore?

So about questions of our life from day to day or of our death. These are great mysteries, and full knowledge is with Allah only.

How much more so in the case of the *Maad*, the Final House, when all true values will be restored and the balance redressed?

It is certain, but the When and the How are known to Allah alone.



أَفَمَن كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَن كَانَ فَاسِقًا لَّا يَسْتَوُونَ

Is then he who is a believer like him who is Fâsiq (disbeliever and disobedient to Allâh)? Not equal are they.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Sajdah

السَّجْدَة

Introduction and Summary

This short Surah closes the series of four Alif, Lam, Mim Surahs, which began with the 29th. Its theme is the mystery of Creation, the mystery of Time and the mystery of the Ma'ad (the Final End) as viewed through the light of Allah's revelation. The contemplation of these mysteries should lead to Faith and the adoration of Allah.

In chronology it belongs to the middle Makkan period and is therefore a little earlier than the last, but its chronology has no significance.

Summary- The mystery of Creation, the mystery of Time, and the mystery of the End of Things are but known by external symbols to man: Revelation brings faith and humble adoration, and is a blessing like Rain, which brings life to dead soil (32:1-30, and C. 185).

C.185 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

How can Unbelievers realise the Mystery
Of Revelation? They do not even
See the marvel and Mystery of Time
And Allah's Creation, and how they were themselves
Created! If they could but see how the End
Will shape itself-how the Good will be sorted out
From Evil! The two are not equal in Goal,
Clear are the Signs and the Revelation of Allah-
In nature, history, and the Message of His living
Prophets, If they learn not now, alas!
It will be too late when Time's wings are furled.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الم (١)

1. Alif Lam Mim.

C3628. See n. 25 to 2:1, and Introduction to Surah 30.

تَنزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢)

2. (This is) the revelation of the Book in which there is no doubt, -- from the Lord of the Worlds.

C3629. By the time of the holy Prophet the earlier Books of Revelation had been corrupted, by human ignorance or selfishness or fraud, or misinterpreted, or lost altogether.

There were sects violently disputing with each other as to their true meaning. Such doubts had to be set at rest, and they were set at rest by the revelation of the Quran.

The Quranic inspiration came direct from Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and did not consist merely of human conjectures or a reconstructed philosophy, in which there is always room for doubt or dispute.

Cf. also 2:2.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ...

3. Or do they say, "He has forged it"?

C3630. The force of **"or"** (***am*** in Arabic) is that the only alternative to the acceptance of the Book as a divine revelation is the supposition that it was a forgery by the holy Prophet.

But the supposition is absurd on the face of it: because;

- the Quraish, his critics, knew him to be an honest and truthful man;
- he was unlettered, and such a Book would have been beyond his powers as a simple unlettered Arab, unless Allah inspired it; and
- there was a definite reason for its coming as it did, because the Arabs had received no Messenger before him and Allah has sent Messengers to every nation.

... بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ...

Nay, it is the Truth from the Lord,

... لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُم مِّن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ (٣)

that thou mayest admonish a people to whom no warner has come before thee:

in order that they may receive guidance.

C3631. The Arabs very much needed guidance for themselves, and the advent of a World Prophet through them was what might have been expected in view of the past course of Allah's Revelations.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ...

4. It is Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth, and all between them, in six Days,

C3632. Six Days: See n. 1031 to 7:54.

The **"Day"** does not mean a day as we reckon it. viz., one apparent course of the sun round the earth, for it refers to conditions which began before the earth and the sun were created.

In verse 5 below, a Day is compared to a thousand years of our reckoning, and in 70:4 to 50,000 years.

These figures "as we reckon" have no relation to "timeless Time", and must be taken to mean very long Periods, or Ages, or Eons.

See further 41:9-12, and notes. 4470-4474, 4475-4478.

... ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ...

and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority):

C3633. Cf. n. 1386 to 10:3.

Allah created the World as we see it in six great Stages. But after the initial creation, He is still in authority and directs and controls all affairs. He has not delegated His powers to others, and Himself retired.

Also see 7:54.

... مَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ...

ye have none, besides Him, to protect or intercede (for you):

... أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٤)

will ye not then receive admonition?

يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ...

5. He rules (all) affairs from the heavens to the earth:

... ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ (٥)

in the end will (all affairs) go up to Him, on a Day, the space whereof will be (as) a thousand years of your reckoning.

C3634. How could the immense mystery of Time behind our ideas of it be enforced on our minds better?

Our Day may be a thousand or fifty thousand years, and our years in proportion. In the immense Past was Allah's act of creation: it still continues, for He guides, rules, and controls all affairs: and in the immense Future all affairs will go up to Him, for He will be the Judge, and His restoration of all values will be as in a Day or an Hour or the Twinkling of an eye; and yet to our ideas it will be as a thousand years!

ذَٰلِكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٦)

6. Such as He, the knower of all things, hidden and open, the Exalted (in power), the Merciful;

C3635. Allah's attributes, then, may be summed up with reference to Knowledge, Power, and Mercy.

- Where our knowledge is partial and uncertain, His is complete and certain.
- Where our power often falls short of the carrying out of our will, or needs the help of Time, His is complete and conterminous with His Will.
- Where our mercy seems to be bounded by or opposed to justice, His is absolute and unconditioned.

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ...

7. He Who has made everything which He has created most Good.

C3636. Allah's creation in itself is good: it is beautiful, in proper proportions, and adapted for the functions it has to perform.

There is no evil or disorder in it. Such evil or disorder as creeps in is due to man's will (as far as the world of man is concerned), and spiritual Teaching is directed to train and cure that will and bring it into conformity with the Universal Order and Plan.

... وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنسَانِ مِن طِينٍ (٧)

He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay,

C3637. Man is asked to contemplate his own humble beginning. His material body (apart from life) is a piece of earth or clay, which is another term for primeval matter.

Matter is therefore the first stage, but even matter was not self-created. It was created by Allah.

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِن سُلَالَةٍ مِّن مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ (٨)

8. And made his progeny from a quintessence of the nature of a fluid despised:

C3638. Then comes life and the reproduction of life.

We are still looking at the purely physical aspect, but it is now a stage higher; it is an animal.

Its reproduction is through the sperm or semen, which is a quintessence of every part of the body of man. Yet it issues from the same part of his body as the urine, and is therefore despicable in man's sight. It is a living cell or cells, summing up so much ancestral life-history.

Cf. 23:12, and n. 2872.

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِهِ...

9. But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit.

C3639. The third stage is indicated by **"fashioned him in due proportion"**. Cf. 15:29.

After fertilization of ovum by the sperm, an individual life comes into existence, and it is gradually fashioned into shape, its limbs are formed; its animal life begins to function; all the beautiful adaptations come into play.

The fourth stage here mentioned is that of distinctive Man, into whom Allah's spirit is breathed. Then he rises higher than animals.

وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ...

And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding):

C3640. As a complete man he gets the higher faculties.

The five animal senses I understand to be included in the third stage. But in the fourth stage he rises higher, and is addressed in the second person, **"you,"** instead of the third person "him".

He has now the spiritual counterpart of hearing (i.e., the capacity of hearing Allah's Message) and seeing (i.e., the inner vision), and feeling the nobler heights of love and understanding the bearings of the inner life (both typified by the Heart). Yet with all these gifts, what thanks does unregenerate or corrupted man give to Allah?

... قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (٩)

little thanks do ye give!

وَقَالُوا أَئِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَئِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ...

10. And they say: "What! when we lie, hidden and lost, in the earth, shall we indeed be in a creation renewed?"

C3641. Cf. 13:5.

It has been the cry of Materialists and Skeptics through the ages not only to bound their horizon with this brief life, but to deny dogmatically that there can be a future life. Though this is against the professed principles of Skeptics, in practice they take up that attitude.

Here **"they"** refers to those "who give little thanks" to Allah, mentioned in the last verse. The argument used against them is:

if Allah can produce such a wonderful creation the first time, why can He not make it again?

That points to the possibility: our own general inner hope and expectation of a future life, coupled with Faith in Allah's work, is the ground of our certainty.

... بَلْ هُم بِلِقَاء رَبِّهِمْ كَافِرُونَ (١٠)

Nay, they deny the meeting with their Lord!

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ...

11. Say:

"The Angel of Death, put in charge of you, will (duly) take your souls:

C3642. If death is certain, as it is, and this life by itself in no way satisfies our instincts and expectations, we may be sure that the agency which separates our soul from our body will bring us into the new world.

If we believe in a soul at all-the very foundation of Religion-we must believe in a Future, without which the soul has no meaning.

... ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (١١)

then shall ye be brought back to your Lord."

Section 2

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُو رُؤُوسِهِمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ...

12. If only thou couldst see when the guilty ones will bend low their heads before their Lord,

... رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا ...

(saying:)

"Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard: now then send us back (to the world):

C3643. In life on the new plane, there will be no room for deception or self-deception. The most hardened sinner will see the truth and the justice of the Day of Account. He will wish he could be sent back, but it will be too late. The world as we know it will have already passed away.

... نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ (١٢)

we will work righteousness: for we do indeed (now) believe."

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَآتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدَاهَا...

13. If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance:

C3644. Could evil have been avoided?

Certainly everything is in Allah's power. If it had been His **Will** and Plan, He could have created a world in which there would have been no choice or will in any of His creatures. But that was not His Will and Plan.

In the world as we see it, man has a certain amount of choice and free-will. That being so, He has provided Signs and means of instruction for man, in order that man's will may be straight and pure.

A necessary corollary will be Punishment for the infraction of His Law. That Punishment must come to pass, for Allah's Word is true and must be fulfilled.

... وَلَكِنْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ مِنِّي ...

but the Word from Me will come true.

C3645. Cf. 11:119. n. 1623, and 7:18, and see last note.

Jinns are the evil spirits that tempt men, and the men who will suffer punishment will be those who have succumbed to their temptations.

... لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٣)

"I will fill Hell with Jinns and men all together."

فَذُوقُوا بِمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا ...

14. "Taste ye then -- for ye forgot the meeting of this day of yours,

C3646. "Forgot": Cf. n. 1029 to 7:51.

"Forget" is here in the sense of "to ignore deliberately, to reject with scorn".

In the sense of mistake or defect of knowledge it is inapplicable to the All-Perfect Being, for we are expressly told: "My Lord never errs, nor forgets": 20:52.

... إِنَّا نَسِينَاكُمْ...

and We too will forget you --

... وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٤)

taste ye the Penalty of Eternity for your (evil) deeds!"

إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهَا خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا...

15. Only those believe in Our Signs who, when they are recited to them, fall down in adoration,

C3647. "In adoration": Sujjadan, or in a posture of prostration, expressive of deep humility and faith. This is the keyword of the Surah, which bears the title of Sajdah.

All the Signs of Allah lead our thoughts upwards towards Him, and when they are expounded, our attitude should be one of humble gratitude to Allah. At this passage it is usual to make a prostration. (R).

... وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ...

and celebrate the praises of their Lord,

... وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (١٥)

nor are they (ever) puffed up with pride.

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ...

16. Their limbs do forsake their beds of sleep,

C3648. Junub: sides, on which men sleep and turn in their sleep: I have translated this "limbs" for shortness. Holy Men and women "breathless with adoration" shun soft, comfortable beds, and luxurious sleep. Their limbs are better exercised in offices of devotion and prayer, especially by night.

Commentators specially refer this to Prayers called **Tahajjud**, which are offered after midnight in the small hours of the morning, in twelve rak'at.

... يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا...

the while they call on their Lord, in Fear and Hope:

C3649. In Fear and Hope: in spiritual fear lest their dedication to Allah should not be sufficiently worthy to be accepted, and a spiritual longing or hope that their shortcomings will be overlooked by the Mercy of Allah.

And their adoration is not shown only in Prayer, but also in practical Service and Charity, out of whatever gifts they may have received from Allah.

... وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (١٦)

and they spend (in charity) out of the sustenance which We have bestowed on them.

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ...

17. Now no person knows what delights of the eye are kept hidden (in reserve) for them --

C3650. Delights of the eye: an idiom for that which pleases most and gives most satisfaction.

In our present state we can scarcely imagine the real Bliss that will come to us in the Future.

...جَزَاء بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٧)

as a reward for their (good) Deeds.

أَفَمَن كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَن كَانَ فَاسِقًا...

18. Is then the man who believes no better than the man who is rebellious and wicked?

C3651. The Future of the two classes-the Blessed and the Wicked-is described in verses 19-22.

...لَّا يَسْتَوُونَ (١٨)

No equal are they.

أَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْمَأْوَى...

19. For those who believe and do righteous deeds, are Gardens as hospitable homes,

C3652. A home brings before our minds a picture of peace and happiness. When to it are added honour and hospitality, it adds further to the idea of happiness.

...نُزُلًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٩)

for their (good) deeds.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا فَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ...

20. As to those who are rebellious and wicked, their abode will be the Fire:

...كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا...

every time they wish to get away therefrom, they will be forced thereinto,

C3653. Cf. 22:22.

Just as the gardens is the type of Bliss, so is the Fire the type of Penalty and suffering. There will be no getting away from it.

What will be the thoughts of those who had earned it?

"We used to reject the idea of the Consequences as a mere chimera: and now we find it to be true!"

What will be their feelings then? How will they like it!

...وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّذِي كُنتُم بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٢٠)

and it will be said to them:

"Taste ye the Penalty of the Fire, the which ye were wont to reject as false."

وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَى دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ...

21. And indeed We will make them taste of the Penalty of this (life) prior to the supreme Penalty,

C3654. The final Penalty is to come in the Hereafter. There is no doubt about it.

But before it comes, a minor Penalty comes in this very life. It may be in some kind of misfortune, or it may be in the pangs of a tortured conscience or secret sorrow.

But this minor Penalty may be really a mercy, as it gives them a chance of repentance and amendment.

...لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٢١)

in order that they may (repent and) return.

...وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ثُمَّ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا

22. And who does more wrong than one to whom are recited the Signs of his Lord, and who then turns away therefrom?

C3655. The worst and most hardened sinner is the man to whom Allah's Signs are actually brought home and who yet prefers Evil and turns away from the Light of Allah.

The Signs may be

- in the words and guidance of a great Teacher or in some minor sorrow or warning, which he disregards with contumely. Or
- it may be in a catastrophic blow to his conscience, which should open his eyes, but from which he deliberately refuses to profit.

The penalty-the Nemesis-must necessarily come eventually.

...إِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُنتَقِمُونَ (٢٢)

Verily from those who transgress We shall exact (Due) Retribution.

Section 3

...وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ

23. We did indeed aforetime give the Book to Moses:

C3656. "The Book" is not here coextensive with Revelation. Moses had, revealed to him, a Law, a Shariah, which was to guide his people in all the practical affairs of their life.

Jesus, after him, was also inspired by Allah: but his Injil or Gospel contained only general principles and not a Code or Shariah.

The holy Prophet was the next one to have a Shariah or **"Book"** in that sense: for the Quran contains both a Code and general principles.

This Surah is a Makkan Surah. The Code came later in Madinah. But he is given the assurance that he will also have a Code, to supersede the earlier Law, and complete the Revelation of Allah.

... فَلَا تَكُن فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّن لِّقَائِهِ...

be not then in doubt of its reaching (thee):

C3657. "Its reaching (thee)": liqaihi. Commentators differ as to the construction of the pronoun **hi**, which may be translated either "its" or "his".

I construe it to refer to "the Book", as that gives the most natural meaning, as explained in the last note.

...وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٢٣)

and We made it a guide to the Children of Israel.

...وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا

24. And We appointed, from among them, Leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered with patience

C3658. The series of Judges, Prophets, and Kings in Israel continued to give good **guidance**, in accordance with Allah's Law, as long as the people continued in Faith and Constancy (persevering patience).

When that condition ceased, Allah's grace was withdrawn, and the people broke up into wrangling sects and practically suffered national annihilation.

...وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ (٢٤)

and continued to have faith in Our Signs.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٢٥)

25. Verily thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgement, in the matters wherein they differ (among themselves).

C3659. These wrangles and disputes among them will continue until the Day of Judgment, but meantime a new Ummah (that of Islam) will arise and take its place, with a universal and unified Message for mankind.

أَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ...

26. Does it not teach them a lesson, how many generations We destroyed before them,

...يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسَاكِنِهِمْ ...

in whose dwellings they (now) go to and fro?

C3660. If a nation gone astray could only learn from the history of earlier nations that were destroyed for their evil!

They could see vestiges of them in their daily goings to and fro: the Jews could see vestiges of the Philistines, Amalekites, etc. in Palestine, and the pagan Arabs, of the 'Ad and Thamud in Arabia.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ...

Verily in that are Signs:

...أَفَلَا يَسْمَعُونَ (٢٦)

do they not then listen?

C3661. "Listen": i.e., listen to the warnings conveyed in Allah's Signs.

Notice how naturally the transition is effected from the physical to the spiritual-from the ruined physical vestiges of ungodly nations on this earth to the more intangible Signs conveyed by History and Revelation.

Here the sense of Hearing is mentioned, both in its physical and its metaphysical or spiritual aspect.

In the next verse the sense of Sight is mentioned in both aspects.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوقُ الْمَاء إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ...

27. And do they not see that We do drive Rain to parched soil (bare of herbage),

C3662. Again, as in the last verse, there is an easy transition from the physical to the spiritual.

In physical nature there may be parched soil, which is to all intents and purposes dead. Allah sends rain, and the dead soil is converted into living land producing rich crops of fodder and corn, nuts and fruits, to satisfy the hunger of man and beast.

So in the spiritual world. The dead man is revivified by Allah's grace and mercy, through His Revelation. He becomes not only an asset to himself but to his dependents and those around him.

...فَنُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا تَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ أَنْعَامُهُمْ وَأَنفُسُهُمْ...

and produce therewith crops, providing food for their cattle and themselves?

...أَفَلَا يُبْصِرُونَ (٢٧)

Have they not the vision?

C3663. The verse begins with "do they not see?" (a wa lam yarau), a physical act. It ends with **"have they not the vision?" (afa la yabsirun),** a matter of spiritual insight.

This is parallel to the two kinds of "hearing" or "listening", explained in n. 3661 above.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْفَتْحُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٨)

28. They say: "When will this decision be, if ye are telling the truth?"

C3664. The Unbelievers may say: "If all this which you say is true, tell us when this final decision between right and wrong will come about."

The answer is: "If you mean that you will postpone your repentance and reform till then, it will be no use: it will be too late for repentance, and no respite will be granted then: this is the Respite, and this is your chance."

قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنفَعُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِيمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ (٢٩)

29. Say:

"On the Day of Decision, no profit will it be to Unbelievers if they (then) believe!

Nor will they be granted a respite."

فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَانتَظِرْ إِنَّهُم مُّنتَظِرُونَ (٣٠)

30. So turn away from them, and wait:

they too are waiting.

C3665. Read 6:158 and n. 984 as a commentary on this.

There it is said to the Unbelievers: "Wait ye: we too are waiting."

Here the Righteous one is told: "Wait (thou): they too are waiting."

The reversal of the order is appropriate: in each case the person (or persons) addressed is mentioned first.

Cf. also 7:71.

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

And put thy trust in Allah, and enough is Allah, as a Disposer of affairs.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ahzab

الأَحْزَابُ

Introduction and Summary

The series of mystic Surahs beginning with Surah 26, having been closed with the last Surah, we now come back to the hard facts of this life. Two questions are mainly considered here, viz.,

1. the attempt by violence and brute force to crush the truth, and
2. the attempt by slander or unseemly conduct, to poison the relations of women with men.

As regards the first, the story of Al Ahzab or the Confederates, who tried to surround and annihilate the Muslim community in Madinah, is full of underhand intrigues on the part of such diverse enemies as the Pagan Quraysh, the Jews (*Banu Nadir) who had been already expelled from Madinah for their treachery, the Ghatfan tribe of Bedouin Arabs from the interior, and the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah in Madinah. This was the unholy Confederacy against Islam. But though they caused a great deal of anxiety and suffering to the beleaguered Muslims, Islam came triumphantly out of the trial and became more firmly established than ever.

The Quraysh in Makkah had tried all sorts of persecution, insult, and bodily injuries to the Muslims, leading to their partial Hijrah to Abyssinia and their Hijrah as a body to Madinah. The first armed conflict between them and the Muslims took place at Badr in Ramadan A.H. 2, when the Quraysh were signally defeated. (See n. 352 to 3:13). Next year (Shawwal A.H. 3) they came to took revenge on Madinah. The battle was fought at Uhud, and though the Muslims suffered severely, Madinah was saved and the Makkans had to return to Makkah with their object frustrated. Then they began to make a network of intrigues and alliances, and besieged Madinah with a force of 10,000 men in Shawwal and Dhu al Qadah A.H. 5. This is the siege of Confederates referred to in 33:9-27, which lasted over two weeks: some accounts give 27 days. It caused much suffering, from hunger, cold, an unceasing shower of arrows, and constant general or concentrated assaults. But it ended in the discomfiture of the Confederates, and established Islam firmer than ever. It was a well-organized and formidable attack, but the Muslims had made the Trench (Khandaq) dug round Madinah by the Prophets' order and under the supervision of Salman the Persian. The siege and battle are therefore known as the Battle of Trench or the Battle of Confederates.

As regards the position and dignity of the ladies of the Prophet's Household and the Muslim women generally, salutary principles are laid down to safeguard their homes and protect them from slander and insult. The ladies of the Household interested themselves in social work and work of instruction for the Muslim women, and Muslim women were being trained more and more in community service. Two of them (the two Zaynab) devoted

themselves to the poor. The nursing of the wounded on or by the battlefield was specially necessary in those days of warfare. The Prophet's daughter Fatima, then aged about q19 t0 20, lovingly nursed her father's wounds at Uhud (A.H. 3): Rufaydah nursed Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh wounds at the Siege of Madinah by the Confederates (A.H. 5): and in the Khaybar expedition (A.H. 7) Muslim women went out from Madinah for nursing service.

A portion of this Surah sums up the lessons of Battle of the Trench and must have been revealed some time after that Battle (Shawwal A.H. 5). The marriage with Zaynab referred to in verse 37 also took place in the same year. Some portions (e.g., verse 27, see n. 3705) were probably revealed in A.H. 7 after the Khaybar settlement.

Summary- The pagan customs in human relationships should be abandoned, and men and women should be held in honour according to natural relationships and spiritual positions (33:1-8, and C. 186).

The Battle of the Trench and its lessons; hypocrites and their fears; Truth and examples to be followed (33:9-27, and C. 187).

High position and seemly conduct for the Prophet's wives unhappy marriage (like Zaynab's) not to be perpetuated on false scruples; Prophet's wives to be treated kindly and gently (33:28-52, and C. 188).

Respect due to Prophet and his family; slander to be avoided and punished; guard your words and your responsibilities (33:53-73, and C. 189).

C.186 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:1-8)

The issue of all things depends
On Allah alone: we must put our trust
On Him as the Guardian of all things, both great

And small; call things by their right names.
If false relationships by custom or superstition
Do harm to men or women, shun them.
The spiritual Guide is more than Father;
The ladies of his household are Mothers
To the Believers-in rank, dignity, and duty.
The Guide will have to give an account
In the Hereafter, and how the Truth was received
Which he was charged to proclaim to men.



يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ...

1. O Prophet! Fear Allah, and hearken not to the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites:

C3666. The fifth year A.H. was a critical year in the external history of early Islam, and this Surah must be read in the light of the events that then took place.

As explained in the Introduction, the Grand Confederacy against Islam came and invested Madinah and failed utterly. It consisted of the Makkan Unbelievers, the desert Arabs of Central Arabia, the Jews previously expelled for treachery from Madinah, the Jews remaining in Madinah and the Hypocrites led by Abdullah ibn Ubi, who have already been described in 9:43-110.

Their bond of union was the common hatred of Islam, and it snapped under the reverses they met with. It is important to note three points.

1. The Jews as a body now lost their last chance of bearing the standard of Islam: the best of them had already accepted the renewal of Allah's Message.
2. A definite status was given to Prophet's household, after the slanders on Hadhrat Aisha had been stilled

(24:11-26), and the true position of the Mothers of the Believers had been cleared.

3. A further exposition of the purity of sex relation was given, based on the story of Hadhrat Zaynab, the "Mother of the Poor". These points will be referred to in later notes.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (١)...

verily Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ...

2. But follow that which comes to thee by inspiration from thy Lord:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (٢)...

for Allah is well acquainted with (all) that ye do.

C3667. In the most adverse circumstances, in the midst of the assaults of Evil, the plots of treason and hypocrisy, the darts of slanders and false charges, and stupid superstitions and taboos, the Prophet of Allah should steer his course steadily according to Allah's Law and not fear human evil, in whatever form it appears.

Men may misjudge, but Allah knows all. Men may try to overthrow Good, but Wisdom is with Allah. (R).

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (٣)

3. And put thy trust in Allah, and enough is Allah, as a Disposer of affairs.

C3668. We must wholly trust Allah; He is the true and efficient Guardian of all interests.

Cf. 4:81, and n. 600.

مَّا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّن قَلْبَيْنِ فِي جَوْفِهِ...

4. Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body:

C3669. "Two hearts in his (one) breast": two inconsistent attitudes:

- such as serving Allah and Mammon; or

- subscribing to both Truth and Superstition; or
- hypocritically pretending one thing and intending another.

Such a thing is against Allah's Law and Will.

Apart from the condemnation of general hypocrisy, two pagan customs of the Times of Ignorance are mentioned, and their iniquity pointed out.

See the notes 3670 and 3671.

Nor can a man love two women with equal love; hence the injustice of marrying more than one wife; see the second clause in 4:3. (R).

...وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمُ اللَّائِي تُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ...

nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by **Zihar** your mothers:

C3670. This was an evil Arab custom, by which the husband selfishly deprived his wife of her conjugal rights and yet kept her to himself like a slave without her being free to remarry. He pronounced words importing that she was like his mother. After that she could not demand conjugal rights but was not free from his control and could not contract another marriage.

See also 58:1-5. where this is condemned in the strongest terms and punishment is provided for it.

A man sometimes said such words in a fit of anger; they did not affect him, but they degraded her position.

...وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ...

nor has He made your adopted sons your sons.

C3671. If a man called another's son "his son", it might create complications with natural and normal relationships if taken too literally.

It is pointed out that it is only a *facon de parler* in men's mouths, and should not be taken literally. The truth is the truth and cannot be altered by men's adopting "sons".

"Adoption" in the technical sense is not allowed in Muslim Law.

Those who have been "wives of your sons proceeding from your loins" are within the Prohibited Degrees of marriage; 4:23: but this does not apply to **"adopted"** sons.

...ذَٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُم بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ...

Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths.

...وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ (٤)

But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way.

...ادْعُوهُمْ لِآبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِندَ اللَّهِ...

5. Call them by (the names) of their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah,

...فَإِن لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ...

but if ye know not their father's (names, call them) your Brothers in faith, or your Maulas.

C3672. Freedmen were often called after their master's name as the "son of so and so". When they were slaves, perhaps their father's names were lost altogether. It is more correct to speak of them as the **Maula** of so and so. But **Maula** in Arabic might also imply a close relationship of friendship: in that case, too, it is better to use the right term instead of the term "son".

"Brother" is not objectionable because "Brotherhood" is used in a wider sense than "fatherhood" and is not likely to be misunderstood.

...وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُم بِهِ وَلَٰكِن مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ...

But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts:

C3673. What is aimed at is to destroy the superstition of erecting false relationships to the detriment or loss of true blood relations. It is not intended to penalize an unintentional slip in the matter, and indeed, even if a man deliberately calls another his son or father, who is

not his son or father, out of politeness or affection, "Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful". It is the action of mischievous parties which is chiefly reprehended, if they intend false insinuations. A mere mistake on their part does not matter. (R).

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٥)

and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ...

6. The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves,

C3674. In spiritual relationship the Prophet is entitled to more respect and consideration than blood-relations, where there is conflict of duties. He is ever nearer – closer to our real interests – than our own selves.

In some Qira'ahs, like that of Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, occur also the words "and he is a father of them", which imply his spiritual relationship and connect on with the words "and his wives are their mothers".

Thus his spiritual fatherhood would be contrasted pointedly with the repudiation of the vulgar superstition of calling any one like Zayd ibn Harithah by the appellation Zayd ibn Muhammad (33:40): such an application is really disrespectful of the Prophet.

... وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ...

and his wives are their mothers.

C3675. See last note. This Surah establishes the dignity and position of the Holy Prophet's wives, who had a special mission and responsibility as Mothers of the Believers.

They were not to be like ordinary women: they had to instruct women in religious matters visit and minister to those who were ill or in distress, and do other kindly offices in aid of the Prophet's mission.

...وَأُوْلُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ

الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ...

Blood-relations among each other have closer personal ties, in the Decree of Allah, than (the Brotherhood of) Believers and Muhajirs:

C3676. No man should deprive his blood-relations of such rights of maintenance and property as they might have. The community of Believers, inhabitants of Madinah and those who had migrated to Madinah from Makkah, also had their mutual rights, but they were not to be put forward as an excuse to defeat the prior rights of natural relationships.

In the early Madinah days, Ansar were allowed to inherit from Muhajirs whose natural relations had not emigrated, but this practice was discontinued when normal relations were reestablished between Makkah and Madinah.

...إِلَّا أَن تَفْعَلُوا إِلَى أَوْلِيَائِكُم مَّعْرُوفًا...

nevertheless do ye what is just to your closest friends:

...كَانَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا (٦)

such is the writing in the Decree (of Allah).

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنكَ وَمِن نُّوحٍ...

7. And remember We took from the Prophets their Covenant as (We did) from thee: from Noah,

C3677. Cf. 3:81.

There is an implied covenant on all created things to follow Allah's Law, which is the law of their being; see 5:1.

But there is a special implied covenant with all Prophets, strict and solemn, that they shall carry out their mission, proclaim Allah's Truth without fear or favour, and be ever ready in His service in all circumstances. That gives them their position and dignity as explained in the last

verse, and their tremendous responsibility in respect of the people whom they come to instruct and lead to the right Path.

...وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ...

Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary:

...وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا (٧)

We took from them a solemn Covenant:

...لِيَسْأَلَ الصَّادِقِينَ عَن صِدْقِهِمْ

8. That (Allah) may question the (Custodians) of Truth concerning the Truth they (were charged with):

C3678. The men to whom Allah's Truth has been committed for promulgation will be asked in the Hereafter as to how the Truth fared in the world-how it was received, who opposed it, and who assisted it.

Like all trustees, they will have to give a full account of their trust. Allah knows all, and it will not add to His information. But it will be evidence for and against those to whom it was preached, so that the responsibility of those who dishonoured it may be duly enforced.

The primary custodians of spiritual Truth are the Prophets, but in descending degrees all men to whom Allah's Message comes are included.

...وَأَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٨)

and He has prepared for the Unbelievers a grievous Penalty.

C.187 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:9-27)

When the formidable forces of a whole Confederacy
Bent on destroying Islam burst
Upon Madinah, it was Allah's grace that saved
The Muslims. The enemies and the Hypocrites

Did their best to defeat the purpose of Allah,
But they were foiled. In the Prophet was found
The ideal Leader for the men of God,
Who became heirs to the heritage; misused
By enemies to Faith and the Laws of Allah.

Section 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ...

9. O ye who believe!
Remember the Grace of Allah, (bestowed) on you,

...إِذْ جَاءتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ ...

when there came down on you hosts (to overwhelm you):

C3679. In this verse is summed up the beginning and the end of the fateful struggle of the Siege of Madinah in A.H. 5.

The composition of the unhallowed Confederacy that came to destroy Islam is referred to in the Introduction. They came with a force of ten to twelve thousand fighting men, an unprecedented army for that time and country. The battle is known as the Battle of the Trench.

... فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا...

but We sent against them a hurricane and force that ye saw not.

C3680. After a close investment of two to four weeks, during which the enemy were disheartened by their ill success, there was a piercing blast of the cold east wind. It was a severe winter, and February can be a very cold month in Madinah, which is about 3,000 ft. above the sea-level.

The enemy's tents were torn up, their fires were extinguished, the sand and rain beat in their faces, and they were terrified by the portents against them. They had already well nigh fallen out amongst themselves, and beating a hasty retreat, they melted away.

The Madinah fighting strength was no more than 3,000, and the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayzah who were in their midst was a source of weakness as they were treacherously intriguing with the enemy. And further there were the Hypocrites: see n. 3666 above. But there were hidden forces that helped the Muslims.

Besides the forces of nature there were moral forces - mutual distrust and bickering in the enemy camp, and on the other side, perfect discipline among the real Muslims, and the superb leadership of the Holy Prophet.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا (٩)

But Allah sees (clearly) all that ye do.

C3681. Allah sees everything. Therefore we may conclude that the discipline and moral fervour of the Muslims, as well as the enemy's insincerities, intrigues, and reliance on brute force, were all contributory causes to his repulse, under Allah's dispensation.

There were many hidden causes which neither party saw clearly.

...إِذْ جَاؤُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ

10. Behold! they came on you from above you and from below you,

...وَإِذْ زَاغَتْ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ

and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped up to the throats,

C3682. The psychology of the combatants is described with matchless vigour in the holy Text. The onrush of the enemy was really tremendous. The Trench round Madinah was between the defenders and the huge attacking force, which had some high ground behind them **"above you":** when any of them came through the valley or over the Trench, they seemed to come **from below**. The showers of arrows and stones on both sides must also have seemed to come from the air.

...وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا (١٠)

and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah!

هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا (١١)

11. In that situation were the Believers tried: they were shaken as by a tremendous shaking.

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ...

12. And behold! the Hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease (even) say:

...مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا (١٢)

"Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion!"

C3683. Before this year's mass attack on Madinah the Muslims had successfully reached the Syrian border on the north, and there were hopes of reaching Yemen in the south. The holy Prophet had seen signs of expansion and victory for the Muslims. Now that they were shut in within the Trench on the defensive, the Hypocrites taunted them with having indulged in delusive hopes. But the event showed that the hopes were not delusive. They were realized beyond expectations in a few years.

وَإِذْ قَالَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا...

13. Behold! a party among them said: "Ye men of Yathrib! Ye cannot stand (the attack)! Therefore go back!"

...وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ...

and a band of them ask for leave of the Prophet, saying, "Truly our houses are bare and exposed,"

C3684. All the fighting men of Madinah had come out of the city and camped in the open space between the City and the Trench that had been dug all round.

The disaffected Hypocrites sowed defeatist rumours and pretended to withdraw for the defence of their homes, though their homes were not exposed, and were fully covered by the vigilant defensive force inside the Trench.

...وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ...

though they were not exposed:

...إِن يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا (١٣)

they intended nothing but to run away.

...وَلَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَآتَوْهَا

14. And if an entry had been effected to **them** from the sides of the (City), and they had been incited to sedition they would certainly have brought it to pass,

C3685. The brunt of the fighting was on the north side, but the whole Trench was guarded. At one or two points enemy warriors did break in within the circuit of the Trench, but they were soon disposed off.

Hadhrat Ali particularly distinguished himself in many fights, wearing the Prophet's own sword and armour.

If any of the enemy had been able to penetrate into the City, the disaffected element, which was only sitting on the fence, would have risen against the Muslims at once- with no delay except what might have been necessary to put on their armour and arms.

...وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوا بِهَا إِلَّا يَسِيرًا (١٤)

with none but a brief delay!

...وَلَقَدْ كَانُوا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ مِن قَبْلُ لَا يُوَلُّونَ الْأَدْبَارَ

15. And yet they had already covenanted with Allah not to turn their backs,

...وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللَّهِ مَسْؤُولًا (١٥)

and a covenant with Allah must (surely) be answered for.

C3686. Apparently, after the battle of Uhud, certain men who had then shown cowardice were forgiven on undertaking that they would behave better next time.

A solemn promise made to the Messenger of Allah is a promise to Allah, and it cannot be broken with impunity.

...قُل لَّن يَنفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ

16. Say: "Running away will not profit you

...إِن فَرَرْتُم مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ ...

if ye are running away from death or slaughter;

C3687. The coward in a fight does not usually save himself from death. He is subject, after desertion, to the fury both of the enemy and of his own side for cowardice and desertion.

Assuming that he did escape with his life, where could he go to?

The brand of cowardice will be on him, and he will be Subject to the vengeance of his own people. In any case, his life would be in ignominy and would be brief, and he would have lost irretrievably the meed of valour.

... وَإِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٦)

and even if (ye do escape), no more than a brief (respite) will ye be allowed to enjoy!"

قُلْ مَن ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً...

17. Say:

"Who is it that can screen you from Allah if it be His wish to give you Punishment or to give you Mercy?"

C3688. It is still worse if the cowardice or desertion is shown in a Cause, which, because of the high issues of truth and justice, may be called the Cause of Allah.

How can any one escape Allah's Punishment?

And in the same way, how can any one prevent another from obtaining Allah's Mercy by repentance and amendment?

The better path, therefore, is to stand firm in Allah's Way, and if you fail through human weakness, to repent and seek Allah's Mercy.

Cf. 33:24, and n. 3698 below.

...وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (١٧)

Nor will they find for themselves, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الْمُعَوِّقِينَ مِنكُمْ وَالْقَائِلِينَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ إِلَيْنَا...

18. Verily Allah knows those among you who keep back (men) and those who say to their brethren, "Come along to us,"

...وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الْبَأْسَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٨)

but come not to the fight except for just a little while.

أَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ...

19. Covetous over you.

C3689. Ashihhatan: covetous, grasping, niggardly.

Here the meaning is twofold:

1. they spare themselves in the fight as compared with you;

   they are niggardly with themselves as against you:

   they contribute little either in personal effort or with their money and resources; and

2. they covet any gains made or booty won, on the part of the real fighters.

...فَإِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ...

Then when fear comes, thou wilt see them looking to thee,

...تَدُورُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِي يُغْشَىٰ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ...

their eyes revolving, like (those of) one over whom hovers death:

...فَإِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوكُم بِأَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ أَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ...

but when the fear is past, they will smite you with sharp tongues, covetous of goods.

C3690. In times of danger, they would look to the holy Prophet for protection, and keep themselves snugly from the fight.

When the danger is past, they will come and brag and wrangle and show their covetousness or greed for gain though they gave of themselves but sparingly.

...أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَأَحْبَطَ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

Such men have no faith, and so Allah has made their deeds of none effect:

C3691. Even any good they may have done becomes vain because of their motives of envy, greed, and covetousness, and their cowardice.

...وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا (١٩)...

and that is easy for Allah.

C3692. It is not surprising that men's deeds fall as it were dead because there is no pure motive behind them. For men it may be difficult to probe motives, but it is easy for Allah, Whom hypocrisy or false show can never deceive.

يَحْسَبُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا...

20. They think that the Confederates have not withdrawn;

...وَإِن يَأْتِ الْأَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوا لَوْ أَنَّهُم بَادُونَ فِي الْأَعْرَابِ...

and if the Confederates should come (again), they would wish they were in the deserts (wandering) among the Bedouins,

...يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ أَنبَائِكُمْ... ...

and seeking news about you (from a safe distance);

C3693. This completes the picture of the psychology of the Hypocrites, begun at verse 12. Let us analyze it.

1. When they first saw the enemy they were already in a defeatist mood, and thought all was over (verse 12).
2. Not content with disloyalty themselves, they tried to infect others, who made paltry excuses to withdraw from the fight (verse 13).
3. They were ready to betray the City to the enemy if once the enemy had gained entrance (verse 14).

4. They forgot all the promises of fidelity which they had previously sworn (verse 15).
5. In their paltry calculations they forgot that cowardice in war does not pay (verses 16-17).
6. Without taking much part in the actual defence, they were ready to talk glibly and claim a lion's share in the fruits of the victory (verses 18-19).
7. Even when the enemy had withdrawn, their cowardly minds were still afraid that the enemy would return, and were already meditating what they would do in that case:

   perhaps they would dwell in the deserts and spy on Madinah from a safe distance; and if caught in Madinah they would fight little and intrigue much.

   It was a miracle that with such men in their midst, the holy Prophet and his band won through.

...وَلَوْ كَانُوا فِيكُم مَّا قَاتَلُوا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٢٠)

and if they were in your midst, they would fight but little.

Section 3

...لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

21. Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern of (conduct)

...لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ ...

for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day,

C3694. We now have the psychology of the Believers,- God-fearing men, led by that pattern of men and of leaders, Muhammad Al-Mustafa.

... وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا (٢١)

and who engages much in the praise of Allah.

C3695. Cf. 26:227: see especially the last clause of that verse in a Makkan Surah, which was amply fulfilled in Madinah.

وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا...

22. When the Believers saw the Confederate forces, they said:

...هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ...

"This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and his Messenger told us what was true."

C3696. This is in contrast to what the Hypocrites said in verse 12 above.

The divine promise of help and success is contingent upon our striving and faith. Nothing comes to the poltroon and the skeptical idler. Dangers and difficulties, and conflict with Evil, are foretold us, and we must meet them with fortitude and courage.

...وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا (٢٢)

And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience.

...مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ...

23. Among the Believers are men who have been true to their Covenant with Allah:

...فَمِنْهُم مَّن قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَنتَظِرُ...

of them some have completed their vow to (the extreme), and some (still) wait:

C3697. In the fight for truth were (and are) many who sacrificed their all-resources, knowledge, influence, life itself-in the Cause, and never wavered.

If they won the crown of martyrdom, they were blessed. Such a one was Sa'd ibn Muaz, the chief of the Aus tribe, the intrepid standard-bearer of Islam, who died of a wound he had received in the Battle of the Trench. Other heroes fought valiantly and lived, always ready to lay down their lives.

Both classes were staunch: they never changed or wavered.

...وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا (٢٣)

but they have never changed (their determination) in the least:

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ...

24. That Allah may reward the men of Truth for their Truth

...وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِن شَاءَ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ...

and punish the Hypocrites if that be His Will, or turn to them in Mercy:

C3698. Before Allah's Mercy there is always room for repentance and forgiveness, even after treason and crime; but the forgiveness will be according to Allah's Will and Plan, which will judge the penitent's sincerity and capacity for good to the nicest degree in his favour.

Cf. also 33:17 above.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٢٤)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوا خَيْرًا...

25. And Allah turned back the Unbelievers for (all) their fury: no advantage did they gain,

C3699. In spite of the mighty preparations and the great forces which the Makkans in concert with the Central Arabian Bedouins, the discontented Jews, and the treacherous Hypocrites, brought to the siege of Madinah, all their plans were frustrated.

Their fury availed them nothing. They departed in hot haste. This was their last and dying effort.

The initiative thereafter lay with the forces of Islam.

...وَكَفَى اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْقِتَالَ...

and enough is Allah for the Believers in their fight.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيزًا (٢٥)

And Allah is full of Strength, Able to enforce His Will.

C3700. For the meaning of **Aziz**, see n. 2818 to 22:40.

وَأَنزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُم مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ...

26. And those of the People of the Book who aided them -- Allah did take them down...

C3701. The reference is to the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qurayzah.

They counted among the citizens of Madinah and were bound by solemn engagements to help in the defence of the City. But on the occasion of the Confederate siege by the Quraish and their allies they intrigued with the enemies and treacherously aided them. Immediately after the siege was raised and the Confederates had fled in hot haste, the Prophet turned his attention to these treacherous "friends" who had betrayed his City in the hour of danger.

... مِن صَيَاصِيهِمْ...

... from their strongholds

C3702. The Banu Qurayzah (see last note) were filled with terror and dismay when Madinah was free from the Quraish danger.

They shut themselves up in their castles about three or four miles to the east (or north east) of Madinah, and sustained a siege of 25 days, after which they surrendered, stipulating that they would abide by the decision of their fate at the hands of Sa'd ibn Muaz, chief of the Aus tribe, with which they had been in alliance.

...وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ ...

and cast terror into their hearts, (so that) some ye slew,

C3703. Sa'd applied to them the Jewish Law of the Old Testament, not as strictly as the case warranted.

In Deut. 20:10-18, the treatment of a city "which is very far off from thee" is prescribed to be comparatively more lenient than the treatment of a city "of those people, which the Lord thy God does give thee for an inheritance," i.e., which is near enough to corrupt the religion of the Jewish people. The punishment for these

is total annihilation: "thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut. 20:16).

The more lenient treatment for far-off cities is described in the next note, According to the Jewish standard, then, the Banu Quraiza deserved total extermination-of men, women, and children. They were in the territory of Madinah itself, and further they had broken their engagements and helped the enemy.

... وَتَأْسِرُونَ فَرِيقًا (٢٦)

and some ye made prisoners.

C3704. Sa'd adjudged them the milder treatment of the "far-off" cities which is thus described in the Jewish Law: "Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: but the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself, and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee" (Deut. 20:13-14).

The men of the Qurayzah were slain: the women were sold as captives of war; and their lands and properties were divided among the Muhajirs.

...وَأَوْرَثَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَئُوهَا

27. And He made you heirs of their lands, their houses, and their goods, and of a land which ye had not frequented (before).

C3705. If this part of the Surah was revealed after the autumn of the Hijrah year 7, it refers to the result of the Khaybar expedition of the autumn.

Khaybar is a Harrah or volcanic tract, well-watered with many springs issuing from its basaltic rocks. It has a good irrigation system and produces good harvests of grain and dates in its wet valleys, while the outcrop of rocks in the high ground affords sites for numerous fortresses.

At present it is inhabited chiefly by men of the race of Bilal (the Abyssinian) who played a prominent part in the

expedition. It is a sort of island in the deserts on the outskirts of Najd.

In the holy Prophet's time there were Jewish colonies settled here, but they were a source of constant trouble especially after Siege of Madinah. It became a nest of all the hostile Jewish elements expelled for their treachery from elsewhere.

Its capital, Khaybar, is about 90 miles due north of Madinah. Its inhabitants offered some resistance, and Hadhrat Ali, though he had just risen from a bed of illness, performed prodigies of valour. After its surrender, a land settlement was made, which retained the cultivators of the soil on the land, but brought them under control, so that no further focus of active hostility should remain near Madinah.

The terms of the settlement will be found in Waqidi.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا (٢٧)

And Allah has power over all things.

C.188 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:28-52)

The Prophet's household is not for worldly
Ends; his consorts have a place
And dignity beyond ordinary women
They must recite and proclaim the Signs
Of Allah. For women have spiritual virtues
And duties like unto men. Allah decrees,
No unhappy wedlock; fear not
To dissolve such and provide what is right
And fitting for the service of Allah. High
Is the Prophet's positions, and he must order
His household as best befits his work
And duties. Allah doth watch all things.

Section 4

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ...

28. O Prophet! say to thy Consorts:

...إِن كُنتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا...

"If it be that ye desire the life of this world, and its glitter, --

...فَتَعَالَيْنَ أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَأُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا (٢٨)...

then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner."

C3706. We now come to the subject of the position of the Consorts of Purity (azwaj mutahharat), the wives of the holy Prophet.

Their position was not like that of ordinary women or ordinary wives. They had special duties and responsibilities.

The only youthful marriage of the holy Prophet was his first marriage-that with Hadhrat Khadija, the best of women and the best of wives. He married her fifteen years before he received his call to Prophethood; their married life lasted for twenty-five years, and their mutual devotion was of the noblest, judged by spiritual as well as social standards. During her life he had no other wife, which was unusual for a man of his standing among his people. When she died, his age was 50, and but for two considerations, he would probably never have married again, as he was most abstemious in his physical life.

The two considerations which governed his later marriages were:

1. compassion and clemency, as when he wanted to provide for suffering widows, who could not be provided for in any other way in that stage of society; some of them, like Sauda, had issue by their former marriage, requiring protection;

2. help in his duties of leadership, with women, who had to be instructed and kept together in the large Muslim family, where women and men had similar social rights.

- Hadhrat Aisha, daughter of Hadhrat Abu Bakr, was clever and learned, and in Hadith she is an important authority on the life of the Prophet.

- Hadhrat Zaynab, daughter of Khuzaima, was specially devoted to the poor; she was called the "Mother of the Poor".

- The other Zaynab, daughter of Jahsh, also worked for the poor, for whom she provided from the proceeds of her manual work, as she was skillful in leather work.

But all the Consorts in their high position had to work and assist as Mothers of the Ummah. Theirs were not idle lives, like those of Odalisques, either for their own pleasure or the pleasure of their husband.

They are told here that they had no place in the sacred Household if they merely wished for ease or worldly glitter. If such were the case, they could be divorced and amply provided for.

وَإِن كُنتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ...

29. But if ye seek Allah and His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter,

...فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنكُنَّ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٢٩)

verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers amongst you a great reward.

C3707. They were all well-doers. But being in their exalted position, they had extra responsibility, and they had to be specially careful to discharge it. In the same way their reward would be "great", for higher services bring higher spiritual satisfaction, though they were asked to deny themselves some of the ordinary indulgences of this life.

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ...

30. O Consorts of the Prophet!

...مَن يَأْتِ مِنكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُضَاعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ...

if any of you were guilty of evident unseemly conduct, the Punishment would be doubled to her,

C3708. "Evident unseemly conduct" i.e., proved misconduct, as opposed to false slanders from enemies.

Such slanders were of no account, but if any of them had behaved in an unseemly manner, it would have been a worse offence than in the case of ordinary women, on account of their special position. Of course none of them were in the least guilty.

...وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا (٣٠)

and that is easy for Allah.

C3709. Cf. 33:19 and n. 3692.

The punishment in this life for a married woman's unchastity is very severe:

- for fornication, public flogging with a hundred stripes, under 24:2;
- or for lewdness (see 4:15) imprisonment;
- or stoning to death for adultery, according to certain precedents established in Canon Law.

But here the question is not about this kind of punishment or this kind of offence. Even minor indiscretions, in the case of women who were patterns of decorum, would have been reprehensible; and the punishment in the Hereafter is on a higher plane, which we can scarcely understand.

But Allah can appreciate every shade of motive in us. More or less is possible there, which might not be possible in the rough and ready law which we administer here.

وَمَن يَقْنُتْ مِنكُنَّ لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَا أَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ...

31. But any of you that is devout in the service of Allah and His Messenger, and works righteousness -- to her shall We grant her reward twice:

C3710. Twice, i.e., once as a righteous woman, and again as a Mother of the Believers, serving the believing women and thus showing her devotion to Allah and His Prophet.

...وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا (٣١)

and We have prepared for her a generous Sustenance.

C3711. Sustenance: all that is necessary to sustain her in happiness in her future life.

يَا نِسَاء النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاء...

32. O Consorts of the Prophet!

ye are not like any of the (other) women:

C3712. This is the core of the whole passage.

The Prophet's Consorts were not like ordinary women, nor was their marriage an ordinary marriage, in which only personal or social considerations enter.

They had a special position and special responsibilities, in the matter of guiding and instructing women who came into the fold of Islam. Islam is a Way of Life, and the Muslims are a family: women have as much place in Islam as men, and their intimate instruction must obviously be through women.

...إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ...

if ye do fear (Allah), be not too complaisant of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire:

...وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا (٣٢)

but speak ye a speech (that is) just.

C3713. While they were to be kind and gentle to all, they were to be guarded on account of their special position lest people might misunderstand or take advantage of their kindness.

They were to make no vulgar worldly displays as in the times of Paganism.

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى...

33. - And stay quietly in your houses,

- and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former Times of Ignorance;

...وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

- and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity;

and obey Allah and His Messenger.

C3714. Obedience to Allah's Law sums up all duties. Regular Prayer (seeking nearness to Allah) and Regular Charity (doing good to fellow-creatures) are mentioned as special features of our Religion.

...إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ...

And Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, ye Members of the Family,

C3715. Notice the transition in the clause to the masculine gender, while before this the verbs and pronouns were in the feminine gender as referring to the Consorts. The statement in the clause is now more general including (besides the consort) the whole family, namely Fatimah the daughter, Ali the on-in-law, and their sons Hasan and Husayn, the beloved grandsons of the Prophet. The masculine gender is used generally, in speaking of a mixed assembly of men and women.

...وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا (٣٣)

and to make you pure and spotless.

وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ...

34. And recite what is rehearsed to you in your homes, of the Signs of Allah and His wisdom:

C3716. The verb is **uzkurna**, feminine gender, as referring to the **Azwaj** again.

It means not only "remember", but "recite", "teach", "make known", "publish", the Message which ye learn at home from the holy Prophet, the fountain of spiritual knowledge.

The **"Signs of Allah"** refer specially to the verses of the Quran, and Wisdom to the resulting Instruction derived therefrom.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا (٣٤)

for Allah understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted (with them).

C3717. Cf. 22:63 and n. 2844.

Allah's understanding is perfect in every detail, however minute. Therefore use His Revelation for every phase of life.

Section 5

...إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

35. - For Muslim men and women --

- for believing men and women,

C3718. Islam, or submitting our will to Allah's Will, includes all the virtues, as particularly specified in this verse.

See n. 3720.

...وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ...

- for devout men and women,
- for true men and women,

...وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ...

- for men and women who are patient and constant,
- for men and women who humble themselves,

...وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ...

- for men and women who give in charity
- for men and women who fast (and deny themselves),

C3719. A number of Muslim virtues are specified here, but the chief stress is laid on the fact that these virtues are as necessary to women as to men.

Both sexes have spiritual as well as human rights and duties in an equal degree, and the future "reward" of the Hereafter, viz., Spiritual Bliss, is provided for the one as for the other.

...وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ...

- for men and women who guard their chastity,

...وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ ...

- and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise --

C3720. The virtues referred to are:

1. Faith, hope, and trust in Allah, and in His benevolent government of the world;
2. devotion and service in practical life;
3. love and practice of truth, in thought and intention, word and deed;
4. patience and constancy, in suffering and in right endeavour;
5. humility, the avoidance of an attitude of arrogance and superiority;
6. charity, i.e., help to the poor and unfortunate ones in life, a special virtue arising out of the general duty of service (No. 2);
7. self-control, typically in food, but generally in all appetites;
8. chastity, purity in sex life, purity in motive, thought, word, and deed;
9. and constant attention to Allah's Message, and cultivation of the desire to get nearer to Allah.

...أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٣٥)

for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ ...

36. It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman,

... إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ...

when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision:

C3721. We must not put our own wisdom in competition with Allah's wisdom. Allah's decree is often known to us by the logic of facts. We must accept it loyally, and do the best we can to help in our own way to carry it out. We must make our will consonant to the Allah's Will. (R).

...وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا (٣٦)

if anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ...

37. Behold! thou didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favor:

C3722. This was Zayd son of Harithah, one of the first to accept the faith of Islam. He was a freedman of the holy Prophet, who loved him as a son and gave him in marriage his own cousin Zaynab.

The marriage however turned out to be unhappy.

See next note.

...أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ...

"Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah."

...وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ...

But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest:

C3723. Zayd's marriage with the Prophet's cousin Zaynab daughter of Jahsh did not turn out happy.

Zaynab the high-born looked down upon Zayd the freedman who had been a slave. And he was not comely to look at. Both were good people in their own way, and both loved the Prophet, but there was mutual incompatibility and this is fatal to married life.

Zayd wished to divorce her, but the Prophet asked him to hold his hand, and he obeyed. She was closely related to the Prophet; he had given a handsome marriage gift on her marriage to Zayd; and people would certainly talk if such a marriage was broken off.

But marriages are made on earth, not in heaven, and it is no part of Allah's Plan to torture people in a bond which should be a source of happiness but actually is a source of misery.

Zayd's wish-indeed the mutual wish of the couple-was for the time being put away, but it became eventually an established fact, and everybody came to know of it. (R).

...وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَن تَخْشَاهُ...

thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah.

C3724. All actual facts are referred to Allah.

When the marriage is unhappy, Islam permits the bond to be dissolved, provided that all interests concerned are safeguarded. Apparently there was no issue here to be considered.

Zaynab had to be considered, and she obtained the dearest wish of her heart in being raised to be a Mother of the Believers, with all the dignity and responsibility of that position. See n. 3706 to 33:28 above.

...فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا...

Then when Zayd had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), We joined her in marriage to thee:

C3725. The *Iddah* or period of waiting after divorce (2:228, and n. 254) was duly completed.

...لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ ...

in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons,

C3726. The Pagan superstition and taboo about adopted sons had to be destroyed.

See 33:4-5 and notes 3671-3672 above.

...إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ...

when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (their marriage) with them:

...وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا (٣٧)

and Allah's command must be fulfilled.

...مَّا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ...

38. There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to him as a duty.

C3727. See n. 3724 above.

...سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلُ ...

It was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away,

C3728. The next clause is parenthetical. These words then connect on with verse 39.

Among the people of the Book there was no taboo about adopted sons, as there was in Pagan Arabia.

...وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُورًا (٣٨)

and the command of Allah is a decree determined.

C3729. Allah's ordering of the world is always full of wisdom. Even our unhappiness and misery may actually have a great meaning for ourselves or others or both. If our first Plan seems to fail, we must not murmur and repine, but retrieve the position by adopting a course

which appears to be the best possible in the light of our duties as indicated by Allah. For Allah's Plan is framed on universal principles that cannot be altered by human action.

الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ...

39. (It is the practice of those) who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him,
and fear none but Allah:

...وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا (٣٩)

and enough is Allah to call (men) to account.

C3730. Our responsibility is to Allah, not to men. Men's opinions may have a bearing on our own interpretation of duty, but when that duty is clear, our only course is to obey Allah rather than men.

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ...

40. Muhammad is not the father of any of your men,
but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets:

C3731. When a document is sealed, it is complete, and there can be no further addition.

The holy Prophet Muhammad closed the long line of Messengers. Allah's teaching is and will always be continuous, but there has been and will be no Prophet after Muhammad. The later ages will want thinkers and reformers, not Prophets.

This is not an arbitrary matter. It is a decree full of knowledge and wisdom: "for Allah has full knowledge of all things."

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٤٠)

and Allah has full knowledge of all things.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا (٤١)

41. O ye who believe!
celebrate the praises of Allah and do this often;

وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٤٢)

42. And glorify Him morning and evening.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ...

43. He it is Who sends blessings on you, as do His angels,

C3732. Blessings: good wishes and mercies.

Allah wishes well to all His creatures, and His angels carry out His work, for their will is in all things His Will.

His chief and everlasting blessing is that He gives us a knowledge of the spiritual world, and helps us towards its attainment.

For the symbolic meaning of Light and Darkness, see 24:35-40, and notes.

...لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ...

that He may bring you out from the depths of Darkness into Light:

...وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا (٤٣)

and He is Full of Mercy to the Believers.

C3733. His Mercies are for all His creatures, but for those who believe and trust in Him, there are special mercies, "a generous Reward" as in the next verse.

تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهُ سَلَامٌ...

44. Their salutation on the Day they meet Him will be "peace!":

...وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَرِيمًا (٤٤)

and He has prepared for them a generous Reward.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٤٥)

45. O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and a Warner --

C3734. The Prophet was sent by Allah in five capacities. Three are mentioned in this verse, and the other two in the verse following.

1. He comes as a Witness to all men about the spiritual truths which had been obscured by ignorance or superstition, or by the dust of sectarian controversy.

   He did not come to establish a new religion or sect. He came to teach Religion.

   He is also a witness to Allah about men's doings and how they receive Allah's Message: see 4:41 and n. 560.

2. He comes as a bearer of the Glad Tidings of the Mercy of Allah. No matter how far men may have transgressed, they have hope if they believe, repent, and live a good life.

3. He also comes as a Warner to those who are heedless. This life will not last. There is a Future Life, and that is all- important. See next note.

وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا (٤٦)

46. And as one who invites to Allah's (Grace) by His leave, and as a Lamp spreading Light.

C3735. See last note. The two other capacities in which the Prophet was sent are here specified.

4. He comes as one who has a right to invite all men to repentance and the forgiveness of sins: but he does this, not of his own authority, but by the permission and authority given to him by Allah.

   This is said lest people may deify the Prophet as they did with other Prophets before him. The personal responsibility of each individual remains, but the Prophet can lead him on the Right and help him.

5. The Prophet also comes as a Light or a Lamp (Siraj) to illuminate the whole world. In 71:16 and elsewhere the same word (Siraj) is used for the sun.

   The comparison is apt. When the sun appears, all the lesser lights pale before its light. And the Message of Islam, i.e., of the Universal Religion, is to diffuse Light everywhere.

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيرًا (٤٧)

47. Then give the glad tidings to the Believers, that they shall have from Allah a very great Bounty.

C3736. The light of Islam is the Biggest Bounty possible and if they truly understand it, they should glory in it.

وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَدَعْ أَذَاهُمْ ...

48. And obey not (the behests) of the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites,

and heed not their annoyances,

C3737. Men of little or no Faith will often lay down the law and tell better men than themselves what to do. In case of refusal they shower insults and injuries. No attention is to be paid to them. It is their way. All will be right under the government of Allah.

... وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ...

but put thy trust in Allah,

...وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا (٤٨)

for enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَمَسُّوهُنَّ...

49. O ye who believe! when ye marry believing women, and then divorce them before ye have touched them,

...فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُّونَهَا...

no period of 'Iddah have ye to count in respect of them:

C3738. See n. 254 to 2:228.

The ***Iddat*** counts for three monthly courses, or

if there are no courses, for three months: see 65:4.

...فَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ ...

so give them a present,

C3739. This present is held, by some, to be in addition to the half dower due to them under 2:237.

If the dower had not yet been fixed, the gift would presumably be larger, and it would absorb the gift prescribed in 2:236.

... وَسَرِّحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا (٤٩)

and set them free in a handsome manner.

C3740. The gifts should be given with good grace, and the freedom of the woman should not be interfered with in any way. If she chooses to marry again immediately, no obstacle should be placed in her path.

On no pretext should she be allowed to remain doubtful about her freedom.

... يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ

50. O prophet!

We have made lawful to thee

C3741. This introduces no new exemption or privilege. Verses 50-52 merely declare the points in which, on account of the special circumstances (see n. 3706 above), the Prophet's marriages differed from those of ordinary Muslims.

This is considered under four heads, which we shall examine in the four notes following.

... أَزْوَاجَكَ اللَّاتِي آتَيْتَ أُجُورَهُنَّ...

- thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers;

C3742. Head 1.

Marriage with dower (4:4):

this is the universal Muslim marriage.

- The difference in the Prophet's case was that there was no limitation to the number of four (4:3),
- and women of the People of the Book (5:5) were not among his wives, but only Believers.

These points are not expressly mentioned here, but are inferred by his actual practice. Obviously women who are expected to instruct other women in Islam must be Muslims.

وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ...

- and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee;

C3743. Head 2.

Women Prisoners of War: the same remark as in the last note.

The point does not arise, as the whole condition and incidents of war have been altered and slavery has been abolished by international agreement.

...وَبَنَاتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنَاتِ عَمَّاتِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالَاتِكَ...

- and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts,

...اللَّاتِي هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ ...

who migrated (from Mecca) with thee;

C3744. Head 3.

These are first cousins, and not within the Prohibited Degrees of Marriage (see 4:23-24).

These are specially mentioned here by way of limitation. None of them could marry the Prophet unless she had performed the Hijrah with him. If she had not so performed it in spite of her close relationship, she could not be credited with any great fervour for Islam, or be considered suitable for instructing other women in Islam.

...وَامْرَأَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً إِن وَهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَن

يَسْتَنكِحَهَا...

- and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her --

C3745. Head 4.

A believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet:

obviously this case, like the last, is only applicable to the Prophet, and it is hedged round with the limitation that the Prophet considers it suitable and proper case of true service to the community, and not merely a sentimental woman's freak.

Some Commentators think there was no such case. But others with whom I agree, think that this applies to Zaynab bint Khutaymah, who had dedicated herself to the poor and was called the Mother of the Poor (Umm al masakin). Similarly, the last head might possibly refer to Zaynab bint Jahsh, who was a daughter of the Prophet's paternal aunt, herself a daughter of Abd al Muttalib.

...خَالِصَةً لَّكَ مِن دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large);

...قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِي أَزْوَاجِهِمْ ...

We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives

C3746. The ordinary law of Muslim marriage will be found chiefly in

2;221-228, 229-231, 232-235,

4:19-22, 23-25, 4:34-35, and 5:5.

...وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُونَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ...

and the captives whom their right hands possess -- in order that there should be no difficulty for Thee.

C3747. The words "this only for thee ... right hands possess" are parenthetical, and the words "in order that..." connect on with the previous clauses beginning with "O Prophet, We have made lawful .... wishes to wed her".

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٥٠)

And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C3748. Marriage is an important relationship not only in our physical life, but in our moral and spiritual life, and its effects extend not only to the parties themselves but to children and future generations, A number of special problems arise according to special circumstances.

Every man and woman must seriously consider all sides of the question and must do the best in his or her power to temper instincts and inclinations with wisdom and guidance from Allah.

Allah wishes to make every one's path easy, for He is indeed **"Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful"**.

تُرْجِي مَن تَشَاء مِنْهُنَّ وَتُؤْوِي إِلَيْكَ مَن تَشَاء...

51. Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest:

C3749. In 4:3 it is laid down that more than one wife is not permissible "if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them".

In a Muslim household there is no room for a "favourite wife" in the sense that such a wife is recipient of favours denied to other wives. In the special circumstances of the Prophet there were more than one, and he usually observed the rule of equality with them, in other things as well as in the rotation of conjugal rights.

But considering that his marriages after he was invested with the Prophetic office were mainly dictated by other

than conjugal or personal considerations (see n. 3706. 33:28), the rotation could not always be observed, though he observed it as much as possible. This verse absolves him from absolute adherence to a fixed rotation.

There are other interpretations, but I agree with most of the Commentators in the view I have explained. (R).

...وَمَنِ ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ...

and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside.

C3750. Where the rotation was for some reason interfered with, it was permissible, by another interference with the usual rotation, to bring satisfaction to one who had been previously set aside.

This was not only permitted, but commended, as tending to remove dissatisfaction and cheer and comfort the eyes and hearts of those who were disappointed in their turn.

...ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَن تَقَرَّ أَعْيُنُهُنَّ ...

This were nigher to the cooling of their eyes,

C3751. Cooling the eyes: an Arabic idiom for cheering and comforting eyes which yearn to see those they love.

A verse of Zeb al Nisa, daughter of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, may be rendered thus:

"My heart is glad whenever lover-wise

I dwell upon thy beauties and thy grace!

But how can I content my hungry eyes,

That ask continually to see thy face?"

... وَلَا يَحْزَنَّ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَا آتَيْتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ...

the prevention of their grief, and their satisfaction -- that of all of them -- with that which thou hast to give them:

C3752. There was not much in the way of worldly goods or satisfaction that the Prophet could give them: see 33:28 above.

But he was kind, just, and true,-the best of men to his family, and they all clung to him.

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَلِيمًا (٥١)

and Allah knows (all) that is in your hearts:

and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

C3753. Our human hearts, however good on the whole, may yet, in their motives, have possibly some baser admixture. The feminine hearts are not more immune in this respect than the masculine. But everything is known and understood by Allah. Who will in His mercy make all allowance for our human weaknesses. His title of "Most Forbearing" (Halim) also gives His devoted worshippers the cue: why should we not also forbear with the faults and weaknesses of our neighbors and fellow-creatures?

... لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاءُ مِن بَعْدُ وَلَا أَن تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجٍ

52. It is not lawful for thee (to marry more) women after this, nor to change them for (other) wives,

C3754. This was revealed in A.H. 7. After that the Prophet did not marry again, except the handmaiden Mary the Copt, who was sent as a present by the Christian Muqawqas of Egypt. She became the mother of Ibrahim, who died in his infancy.

...وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ ...

even thought their beauty attract thee, except any thy right hand should possess (as handmaidens):

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَّقِيبًا (٥٢)

and Allah doth watch over all things.

C.189 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(33:53-73)

Believers should cultivate refined respect
In social and spiritual life. And the Mothers

Of the Faithful have to uphold their dignity,
So should all women protect their honour
And uphold their dignity. The Hour
Will come when all Evil will be punished.
Fear Allah, and always speak the word
That leads to Right. Arduous is the Quest
Of Mankind's high and noble Destiny-
Beyond the reach of other creatures:
Let man but strive in Faith, and fulfil
Allah's Trust-by the grace and mercy of Allah.

Section 7

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ...

53. O ye who Believe!
enter not the Prophet's houses --

...إِلَّا أَن يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نَاظِرِينَ إِنَاهُ...

until leave is given you -- for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation:

C3755. The rules of refined social ethics is as necessary to teach to-day as it was with the rude Arabs whom the holy Prophet had to teach in his day. Those mentioned in this verse may be briefly recapitulated thus:

1. Enter not a friend's house without permission;
2. if invited to dine, don't go too early;

   you are asked to dine, not to wait for the preparation of the food;
3. be there at the time appointed, so that you enter when you are expected and invited;
4. after the meal, don't get familiar with your host, especially if there is a great distance between him and you;

5. don't waste time in tittle-tattle, causing inconvenience and perhaps annoyance to your host;
6. understand what is proper behaviour for you: he may be too polite to ask to depart.

All this has a spiritual as well as social beating: respect and delicate consideration for others are among the highest virtues.

...وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا...

but when ye are invited, enter;

...فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ...

and when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk.

...إِنَّ ذَٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنكُمْ...

Such (behavior) annoys the Prophet:

He is ashamed to dismiss you,

...وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ...

but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth.

...وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِن وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ...

And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen:

C3756. The actual manner of showing respect to ladies may be different in different circumstances. But it is an essential principle of good society to show the greatest deference to them.

To the "Mothers of the Believers" this respect was due in an exceptional degree.

...ذَٰلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ...

that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs.

...وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ ...

Nor is it right for you

C3757. Considering his position, the holy Prophet deserved to be respected before all other men and nothing should be done to cause him the least harm and annoyance.

This applied not only during his life-time, but it applies now, because his teaching and personality are alive to us.

It was not fitting that his widows, both for their own position and for the position of the Prophet, should be married by other men after him. And this mark of respect was duly observed in history.

... أَن تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ...

that ye should annoy Allah's Messenger,

C3758. "Annoy": Adha' may equally mean:

- to vex,
- to cause hurt or injury,
- to insult,
- to ill-treat by slander or unseemly conduct, or hurt the feelings of (some one).

The Prophet came with a divine mission to teach and reclaim the world, and he is entitled to the respect of all, even of those who do not consciously acknowledge his mission, for his mission works constantly like the forces of nature.

In a minor degree the "Mothers of the Believers" are also entitled to respect.

...وَلَا أَن تَنكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا...

or that ye should marry his widows after him at any time.

...إِنَّ ذَٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِندَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا (٥٣)

Truly such a thing is in Allah's sight an enormity.

إِن تُبْدُوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٥٤)

54. Whether ye reveal anything or conceal it, verily Allah has full knowledge of all things.

C3759. Respect or opposition may be shown overtly or in devious hidden ways. All good and evil are open before Allah, and He will take due account of everything.

لَّا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِي آبَائِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَائِهِنَّ...

55. There is no blame (on these ladies if they appear) before

- their fathers or their sons,

C3760. This refers back to the *Hijab* (screen) portion of verse 53 above.

The list of those before whom the Prophet's wives could appear informally without a screen is their,

- fathers,
- sons,
- brothers,
- brothers' or sisters' sons,
- serving women,
- and household slaves or servants.

Commentators include uncles (paternal and maternal) under the heading of "fathers'.

Their women is held to mean all women who belonged to the Muslim community: other women were in the position of strangers, whom they received not so intimately, but with the formality of a screen as in the case of men.

Compare with this list and the wording here the list and the wording in 24:31, which applies to all Muslim women.

In the list here, husbands and husbands' relatives are not necessary to be mentioned, as we are speaking of a single household, that of the central figure in Islam, nor men-servants nor children, as there were none.

In the wording note that for Muslim women generally, no screen or *Hijab* (Pardah) is mentioned, but only a veil to cover the bosom, and modesty in dress. The screen was

a special feature of honour for the Prophet's household, introduced about five or six years before his death.

...وَلَا إِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءِ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ...

- their brothers, or their brothers' sons,

...وَلَا أَبْنَاءِ أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَائِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ...

- or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the (slaves) whom their right hands possess.

...وَاتَّقِينَ اللَّهَ...

And (ladies), fear Allah:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا (٥٥)

for Allah is Witness to all things.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ...

56. Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet:

C3761. Allah and His angels honour and bless the holy Prophet as the greatest of men. We are asked to honour and bless him all the more because he took upon himself to suffer the sorrows and afflictions of this life in order to guide us to Allah's Mercy and the highest inner Life.

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (٥٦)

O ye that believe!

send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ...

57. Those who annoy Allah and His Messenger -- Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter,

C3762. Cf. n. 3758 above.

...وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا (٥٧)

and has prepared for them a humiliating Punishment.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوا...

58. And those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly,

...فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا (٥٨)

bear (on themselves) a calumny and a glaring sin.

C3763. Cf. 4:112. In that passage we were told that any one who was himself guilty but accused an innocent man of his guilt, was obviously placing himself in double jeopardy;

- first, for his own original guilt, and
- secondly for the guilt of a false accusation.

Here we take two classes of men instead of two individuals.

The men and women of faith (if they deserve the name) and doing all they can to serve Allah and humanity. If they are insulted, hurt, or annoyed by those whose sins they denounce, the latter suffer the penalties of a double guilt, viz., their sins to start with, and the insults or injuries they offer to those who correct them. Instead of resenting the preaching of Truth, they should welcome it and profit by it.

Section 8

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

59. O prophet!

tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women,

C3764. This is for all Muslim women, those of the Prophet's household, as well as the others. They were asked to cover themselves with outer garments when walking around. (R).

...يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِن جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ...

that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad):

C3765. Jilbab, plural **Jalabib**:

- an outer garment;
- a long gown covering the whole body,
- or a cloak covering the neck and bosom.

...ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَن يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ...

that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested:

C3766. The object was not to restrict the liberty of women, but to protect them from harm and molestation.

In the East and in the West a distinctive public dress of some sort or another has always been a badge of honour or distinction, both among men and women.

This can be traced back on the earliest civilisations. Assyrian Law in its palmiest days (say, 7th century B.C.), enjoined the veiling of married women and forbade the veiling of slaves and women of ill fame:

see Cambridge Ancient History, 111. 107.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٥٩)

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C3767. That is, if a Muslim woman sincerely tries to observe this rule, but owing to human weakness fails short of the ideal, then "Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful".(R).

...لَئِن لَّمْ يَنتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ

60. Truly, if the Hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease,

...وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ...

and those who stir up sedition in the City, desist not, We shall certainly stir thee up against them:

C3768. It was necessary to put down all kinds of unseemly conduct in the Prophet's City. And here is the

wanting in the plainest terms. And the warning had its effect.

The **"Hypocrites"** were men who pretended to be in Islam but whose manners and morals were anti-Islamic. Those **"with diseased hearts"** may have been the ones that molested innocent women.

"Those who stiffed up sedition" put false rumours in circulation to excite the crowd.

Alas! we must ask ourselves the question: "Are these conditions present among us to-day?"

ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٦٠)...

then will they not be able to stay in it as thy neighbors for any length of time:

مَلْعُونِينَ...

61. They shall have a curse on them:

C3769. They will be deprived of the blessing and guidance of Allah.

They sought to cause disorder in Allah's world-moral as well as material; but they will themselves be destroyed.

Those who become outlaws, rebels against the Law, will themselves be destroyed by the Law. Capital punishment is the only adequate punishment for treason and crimes of sustained concerted violence - for the protection of the hearts and homes of innocent citizens and the honour of their women.

أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوا أُخِذُوا وَقُتِّلُوا تَقْتِيلًا (٦١)...

wherever they are found, they shall be seized and slain (without mercy).

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلُ...

62. (Such was) the practice (approved) of Allah among those who lived aforetime:

C3770. The Jewish law was much more severe: see notes 3703 and 3704 to 33:26. That severity is mitigated in Islam.

But it is a universal principle that any element which deliberately refuses to obey law and aggressively tries to subvert all order in society, secretly and openly, must be effectively suppressed, for the preservation of the life and health of the general community.

...وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا (٦٢)

no change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of Allah.

...يَسْأَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ

63. Men ask thee concerning the Hour:

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِندَ اللَّهِ...

say, "The knowledge thereof is with Allah (alone)":

C3771. Cf. 7:187 and n. 1159, where the idea is further explained.

> The knowledge of the Final Hour is with Allah alone.
>
> The fact of its coming is certain; the exact time when it will come has not been revealed. If it were, it would disturb our thoughts and life.
>
> "Heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth."
>
> But at any given moment it cannot be far distant.

In theological language, each individual's death is a Final Hour, a *Qiyamah Sughra* (Lesser Day of Judgement).

In that sense it is not the same for all individuals, and is certainly always near. "In the midst of life we are in death", as the Anglican Prayer-Book says in its Burial Service.

...وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ قَرِيبًا (٦٣)

and what will make thee understand? -- perchance the Hour is nigh!

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا (٦٤)

64. Verily Allah has cursed the Unbelievers and prepared for them a Blazing Fire --

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَّا...

65. To dwell therein forever:

...يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (٦٥)

no protector will they find, nor helper.

...يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ

66. The Day that their faces will be turned upside down in the Fire, they will say:

C3772. The **face** is the expression of their Personality, their Self; and **turning upside down** is a sign of degradation and ignominy.

When the Retribution comes, the evil ones will be humiliated, and they will wish that they had followed right guidance when they had the chance. They will then fall to accusing their leaders who misled them. But they forget their own personal responsibility.

...يَا لَيْتَنَا أَطَعْنَا اللَّهَ وَأَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَا (٦٦)

"Woe to us! would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger!"

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا (٦٧)

67. And they would say:

"Our Lord! we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they misled us as to the (right) path.

رَبَّنَا آتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيرًا (٦٨)

68. "Our Lord! give them Double Penalty and curse them with a very great Curse!"

C3773. Cf. 25:69 and n. 3129, and 11:20 and n. 1515.

The double Penalty invoked will be because:

- they went wrong themselves and
- they misled others.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ آذَوْا مُوسَى...

69. O ye who believe! be ye not like those who vexed and insulted Moses,

C3774. The people of Moses often vexed him and rebelled against him and against Allah's Law. Here the reference seems to be to Num. 12:1-13. It is there said that;

> Moss's own sister Miriam and his brother Aaron spoke against Moses because Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. Allah cleared Moses of the charge of having done anything wrong:
>
> "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house."
>
> Miriam was afflicted with leprosy for seven days as a punishment, after which she was forgiven, as also was Aaron.
>
> This is the Old Testament story.

The Holy Prophet was also attacked because of his marriage with Zaynab bint Jahsh, but not by his own circle; his motives were of the highest and were completely vindicated as we have seen above.

...فَبَرَّأَهُ اللَّهُ مِمَّا قَالُوا... ...

but Allah cleared him of the (calumnies) they had uttered:

...وَكَانَ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَجِيهًا (٦٩)

and he was honorable in Allah's sight.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا (٧٠)

70. O ye who believe! fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right:

C3775. We must not only speak the truth as far as we know it, but we must always try to hit the right point; i.e.,

we must not speak unseasonably, and when we do speak, we must not beat about the bush, but go straight to that which is right, in deed as well as in word.

Then Allah will make our conduct right and cure any defects that there may be in our knowledge and character. With our endeavour directed straight to the goal, we shall be forgiven our errors, shortcomings, faults, and sins of the past.

يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ...

71. That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sins:

...وَمَن يُطِعْ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا (٧١)

he that obeys Allah and His Messenger has already attained the highest Achievement.

C3776. This is salvation, the attainment of our real spiritual desire or ambition, as we are on the highway to nearness to Allah.

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ ...

72. We did indeed offer the Trust

C3777. The Trust is something given to a person, over which he has a power of disposition; he is expected to use it as directed or expected, but he has the power to use it otherwise.

There is no trust if the trustee has no power, and the trust implies that the giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee would use it according to the wish of the creator of the trust, and not otherwise.

... عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ...

to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains:

C3778. What is the meaning of the offer of the Trust to the Heaven, the Earth, and the Mountains?

Cf. 59:21, where the hypothetical sending down of the Quran to the Mountains is mentioned, and it is

mentioned that such Parables are put forth in order to aid men to reflection.

We may therefore take the Mountains the Earth, and the Heavens as symbolical.

The mountains stand for firmness and stability: they have been created for the quality, and they are always true to that quality. An earthquake or a volcano has to do with movements within the earth's crust: it has nothing to do with the Mountain's will. In fact it has no free will of any kind: there is no question of any Trust here.

If we take the Earth as a whole, as a part of the solar system or a compendium of the terrestrial Nature we see around us, it obeys the fixed laws of Allah, and there is no Will or Trust.

If we take the Heaven either as celestial space, or as symbolical of the Angels, they absolutely obey Allah's Will and law: they have no will of their own.

...فَأَبَيْنَ...

but they refused

C3779. The Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains, i.e. other creatures of Allah, besides man, refused to undertake a Trust or a responsibility, and may be imagined as happy without a choice of good or evil being given through their will.

In saying that they refused, we imply a will, but we limit it by the statement that they did not undertake to be given a choice between good and evil.

They preferred to submit their will entirely to Allah's Will, which is All-Wise and Perfect, and which would give them far more happiness than a faculty of choice, with their imperfect knowledge.

Man was too audacious and ignorant to realise this, and the result has been that man as a race has been disrupted: the evil ones have betrayed the Trust and brought Punishment on themselves, though the good have been able to rise far above other Creation, to be

the muqarrabin, the nearest ones to Allah: 56:11 and 56:88.

What can be higher than this for any creature?

It follows incidentally from this that the Heavens and the Earth were created before man was created and this is in accordance with what we know of the physical world in science: man came on the scene at a comparatively late stage.

... أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا ...

to undertake it, being afraid thereof:

C3780. Hamala: to undertake, bear, carry (the Trust or responsibility), to be equal to it.

This is the ordinary meaning, and the majority of Commentators construe so.

But some understand it to mean -

> "to carry away, run away with, to embezzle (the thing entrusted); hence to be false to the Trust, to betray the Trust."

In that case the sense of verses 72-73 would be: -

> "Allah offered the Trust to other creatures, but they refused, lest they should betray it, being afraid from that point of view: but man was less fair to himself: in his ignorance he accepted and betrayed the Trust, with the result that some of his race became Hypocrites and Unbelievers and were punished, though others were faithful to the Trust and received Allah's Mercy".

The resulting conclusion is the same under both interpretations.

... وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنسَانُ...

but man undertook it --

C3781. See 2:30-34 and n.47, nn.48-49.

Allah intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but

in his corruption he made himself even lower than the beasts.

What was it that made man so high and noble?

The differentiating quality which Allah gave man was that Allah breathed something of His own spirit into man (32:9; 15:29 and n. 1968; and other passages).

This meant that man was given a limited choice of good and evil, and that he was made capable of Forbearance, Love, and Mercy. And in himself man summed up Allah's great world: man is in himself a microcosm.

إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا (٧٢)...

he was indeed unjust and foolish --

C3782. That man should undertake the God-like attributes (in however small a degree) of Will. Forbearance, Love and Mercy, brought him nearer to Allah than was possible for any other creature of Allah.

This was part of Allah's Will and Plan, but little did man realize then what a tremendous task he was undertaking or question himself whether he would be equal to it.

Zalum (translated -unjust-) and **Jahul** (ignorant) are both in the Arabic intensive form; as much as to say, 'man signally failed to measure his own powers or his own knowledge. But Allah's Grace came to his assistance. Where man did his best, he won through by Allah's Grace, even though man's Best was but a poor Good.

How did man generically undertake this great Responsibility, which made him Vicegerent on earth (2:30)?

Here comes in the doctrine of a Covenant, express or implied, between Allah and Humanity. See 7:172,173 and notes 1146-48 also 5:1 and n. 682.

A Covenant (Mithaq) necessarily implies Trust, and its breach necessarily implies Punishment.

لِيُعَذِّبَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ...

73. (With the result) that Allah has to punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Unbelievers, men and women,

C3783. Man's generic Covenant, which flowed from his exercising the option given him, choosing Will, Forbearance, Love, and Mercy, made it necessary that breach of it should carry its own punishment.

Breach of it is here classed under two heads:

those who betray their Trust act either as Hypocrites or as Unbelievers.

- Hypocrites are those who profess Faith but bring not forth the fruits of Faith.
- Unbelievers are those who openly defy Faith, and from whom therefore no fruits of Faith are to be expected.

وَيَتُوبَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ...

and Allah turns in Mercy to the Believers, men and women:

C3784. Those who remain firm to their Faith and their Covenant (see notes 3781-82) will receive the aid of Allah's Grace; their faults and weaknesses will be cured; and they will be made worthy of their exalted Destiny. For Allah is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful.

So ends a Surah which deals with the greatest complications and misunderstandings in our throbbing life here below, and points upwards to the Great Achievement, the highest Salvation.

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٧٣)...

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

The Absolute Reality

إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ

Truly, my Lord enlarges the provision for whom He wills of His slaves, and (also) restricts (it) for him,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Saba'

سبأ

Introduction and Summary

Now we begin a series of Surahs Surah 34 to Surah 39 which recapitulate some of the features of the spiritual world. This Surah leads off with emphasis on Allah's Mercy and Power and Truth.

- Then (in Surah 35) we are told how angels manifest the Power of Allah, and how different is Good from Evil and Truth from Falsehood.
- Surah 36 is devoted to the Holy Prophet and the Quran that came through him.

- In Surah 37 the emphasis is on the snares of the Evil One;
- in Surah 38, on the conquest of evil by wisdom and power as in the case of David and Solomon, and by Patience and Constancy as in the case of Job; and
- in Surah 39, on the Final Judgement, which will sort out Faith from Unfaith and give to each its due.

The chronology has here no significance. This Surah belongs to the early Makkan period.

Summary- No Good or Truth is ever lost; Human Power and Prosperity are fleeting; but Allah's Power and Justice endure, and will enforce personal responsibility on man on the Last Day (34:1-30, and C. 190).

Faith and Unfaith will eventually find their true places and true values; Falsehood has no power; Truth is with Allah (34:31-54, and C. 191).

C.190 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(34:1-30)

Allah's Mercy and power endure forever;
Man should understand and not resist
Allah's Revelation. Human wisdom and Power,
As given to David, were only for establishing
Righteousness. Human glory, like Solomon's
Rested on slender foundations. Saba'
But enjoyed her fair and prosperous state
As long as she obeyed the Law
Of Allah, but perished for unrighteousness.
Learn, then, that the Mercy and Power, Wisdom
And Justice, of Allah are beyond all comparison.
Do right and prepare for Final Day.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ...

1. Praise be to Allah,

C3785. All Creation declares His Praises, i.e., manifests His Mercy and Power, Goodness and Truth, all the sublime attributes summed up in His Most Beautiful Names (7:180 and 17:110 and notes).

For man to contemplate these is in itself a Revelation. This sentiment opens five Surahs of the Quran evenly distributed, viz., Surah 1, 6, 18, 34, and 35. Here the point most emphasised is that His wisdom and mercy comprehend all things, extended in space or in time-here and everywhere, now and evermore. (R).

... الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

to Whom belong all things in the heavens and on earth:

... وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ...

to Him be Praise in the Hereafter:

... وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ (١)

and He is Full of Wisdom, acquainted with all things.

يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا...

2. He knows all that goes into the earth, and all that comes out thereof;

C3786. An ignorant man may think that water absorbed in the soil or seed sown beneath the sod is lost, but it replenishes numerous rills, and streams, and feeds and sustains numerous roots and forms of life, and throws up all kinds of vegetable life.

So with things that come out of the earth: who can count the myriad forms of herbs and trees that grow and perish, and yet sustain a continuous life for ages and ages?

Yet these are symbolical of other things or entities beyond time or space, and beyond physical form. We see the birth and death of the animal part of man: When he is buried beneath the soil, the ignorant man thinks there is an end of him.

But what countless stages still lie before him for his inner and spiritual life?

And so with the Platonic Forms of Things: Goodness, Virtue, Mercy, and the various functions of the soul. They are never lost, but go up to Allah.

... وَمَا يَنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا...

all that comes down from the sky and all that ascends thereto:

C3787. The vapours that rise from the earth and ascend to the sky descend again as rain and snow and as symbols of Allah's Mercy. So are the prayers of the devout and the call of those in agony for help and light, answered by the descent of mercy and guidance, help and light from the Throne of Majesty.

The Imagery indicated in the last note can be worked out to moral and spiritual forces, and they all centre in Allah.

Do not forget that, just as there is the element of Mercy, so there is an element of Justice and Punishment - in the physical forces as well as in the moral and spiritual forces, all centering in Allah.

... وَهُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ (٢)

and He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-Forgiving.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ...

3. The Unbelievers say, "Never to us will come the hour":

C3788. The last two verses prepared us to realise the position of Unbelievers in Allah's great Universe. They are the discord in the universal harmony of Prayer and Praise. Their existence is due to the grant of a limited free-will, the Trust which the Unbelievers have betrayed (see 33:72 and n. 3777-79 and n. 3780-82).

But they must and will be eliminated: see verse 5 below.

For there is nothing more certain in the world, physical, moral, and spiritual, than that every cause, great or small, must have its corresponding consequences.

... قُلْ بَلَى وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ ...

say,

"Nay! but most surely, by my Lord, it will come upon you --

C3789. The strongest emphasis and the most perfect assurance of certainty are indicated by reference to the authority of Allah Himself, the Ruler of the Day of Judgment.

...عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

by Him Who knows the unseen -- from Whom is not hidden the least little atom in the Heavens or on earth:

... وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِن ذَٰلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣)

nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but is in the Record Perspicuous:

C3790. In the symbolical language of our own human experience, a record is more enduring than memory: in fact (if properly preserved) it is perpetual.

If, further, it is expressed in clear language, without any obscurity, it can always be read with perfect precision and without any doubt whatever. Apply these qualities, free from human defect to Allah's laws and decrees. They are unerring and enduring. Everything, greater or small, will receive due recognition-a Reward for Good and a Punishment for Evil.

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ...

4. That He may reward those who believe and work deeds of righteousness:

... أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٤)

for such is Forgiveness and a Sustenance Most Generous."

C3791. "Sustenance": Spiritual in things spiritual, and physical in things physical.

It implies not only the satisfaction of desire, but the provision of means for sustaining the ground won and for winning more ground in the march of progress.

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رِّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ (٥)

5. But those who strive against Our Signs, to **frustrate** them -- for such will be a Penalty -- a Punishment most humiliating.

C3792. Cf. 22:51.

Allah's Plan cannot be **frustrated**. It is those who work against it, who will be eliminated and destroyed.

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقَّ...

6. And those to whom knowledge has come see that the (Revelation) sent down to thee from thy Lord -- that is the Truth,

C3793. Against the doubts and vain imaginings of the Ignorant is the certainty of knowledge of the Enlightened: that Allah reveals Himself, and that His Revelation is true, and leads to the Path of true Guidance.

That Path is the Path of Allah, Who, in His infinite Love and Mercy, is Worthy of all Praise. It is possible to connect this with the "Record Perspicuous" in verse 3 above: 'it is perspicuous.... for the Enlightened do see...'

... وَيَهْدِي إِلَىٰ صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ (٦)

and that it guides to the Path of the Exalted (in Might), Worthy of all praise.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ إِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ...

7. The Unbelievers say (in ridicule):

"Shall we point out to you a man that will tell you, when ye are all scattered to pieces in disintegration,

C3794. This is a taunt against the holy Prophet, and it is applicable to all who preach the doctrine of a Future Life.

How is it possible, say the Unbelievers, that when a man's body is reduced to dust and scattered about, the man should rise again and become a new Creation?

They add that such a preacher is inventing a deliberate falsehood or is demented.

... إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (٧)

that ye shall (then be raised) in a New Creation?

أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَم بِهِ جِنَّةٌ...

8. "Has he invented a falsehood against Allah, or has a spirit (seized) him?" --

C3795. The answer is:

the Future Life is the truest of all Truths; so far is the man who teaches it from being demented, that it is those who deny it, that lack knowledge and are in real jeopardy for their souls; for they persecute Truth and must not only suffer defeat, but go farther and farther from Realities and thus suffer the worst hallucination about the next world.

...بَلِ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ فِي الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ (٨)

Nay,

it is those who believe not in the Hereafter, that are in (real) Penalty, and in farthest Error.

أَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

9. See they not what is before them and behind them, of the sky and the earth?

C3796. The men who walk in spiritual darkness and laugh at a Hereafter have but to observe the Power of Allah in the nature around them.

He Who created the heavens and the earth and sustains them can surely make a new Creation! And the cosmic Laws which are so just and inevitable should surely give them an idea of the inexorable Justice that must redress all balance.

... إِن نَّشَأْ نَخْسِفْ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ نُسْقِطْ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

If We wished, We could cause the earth to swallow them up,

C3797. Cf. 16:45, and n. 2071.

Who are these puny creatures-skeptics that question the might and majesty of Allah?

... كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ...

or cause a piece of the sky to fall upon them.

C3798. Cf. 26:187.

This was actually a challenge hurled at Shu'aib and a shower of ashes and cinders came from above and overwhelmed the challengers!

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيبٍ (٩)

Verily in this is a Sign for every devotee that turns to Allah (in repentance).

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا...

10. We bestowed Grace aforetime on David from Ourselves:

C3799. Cf. 21:79-80, and notes 2733-34.

David had the gift of song and sacred music, and this is shown in his Psalms.

All nature-hills and birds-sing and echo back the Praises of Allah.

... يَا جِبَالُ أَوِّبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ...

"O ye Mountains! sing ye back the Praises of Allah with him!

and ye birds (also)!

... وَأَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ (١٠)

and We made the iron soft for Him --

C3800. Iron or steel is hard stuff: but in the hands of a craftsman it becomes soft and pliable, and with it can be made instruments for the defence of righteousness.

These, in the literal sense, are coats of mail, and defensive armour, and the manufacture of them is traditionally attributed to David. (R).

أَنِ اعْمَلْ سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ...

11. (Commanding),

"Make thou coats of mail, balancing well the rings of chain armor,

C3801. Coats of chain armour have to be made with cunning art, if the chains are to fit into each other and the whole garment is to be worn in comfort in fierce warfare.

... وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا...

and work ye righteousness;

C3802. Note the transition from the singular, "make them coats of mail", to the plural "and work ye righteousness".

The first is addressed to David, who was the artificer of defensive armour; and the second is addressed to him and his whole people. He made the armour, but it was to be worn not only by him but all the warriors. But he and all his people were to be careful to see that they did not deviate from the paths of righteousness.

Fighting is a dangerous weapon and may well degenerate (as it so often does) into mere violence. They were to see that this should not happen, and they were told that Allah was watching over them all with the personal solicitude implied in the singular pronoun **"I"**.

... إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١)

for be sure I see (clearly) all that ye do."

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ وَرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ...

12. And to Solomon (We made) the Wind (obedient):

its early morning (stride) was a month's (journey), and its evening (stride) was a month's (journey);

C3803. Cf. 21:81-82, n. 2736, and 38:36-38.

See also 27:38-39.

The winds are swift and can cover in a short morning's or evening's flight the distance which it takes a whole month to cover on foot or by bullock cart.

In our own day, with air speeds of 400 miles and more per hour, this seems a moderate statement.

... وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ...

and We made a **Font** of molten brass to flow for him;

C3804. In the Old Testament, II. Chronicles, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4, are described the various costly materials with which Solomon's Temple was built, and it was furnished with vessels, candle-sticks, lamps, censers, etc.

"Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out" (II. Chronicles, 4:18).

"Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about" (II. Chronicles, 4:2).

The receptacle or "sea" or Font was made of molten brass; presumably it contained flowing water for washing with.

... وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَن يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ...

and there were Jinns that worked in front of him, by the leave of his Lord,

C3805. See 27:17, and n. 3257. (R).

... وَمَن يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١٢)

and if any of them turned aside from Our command, We made Him taste of the Penalty of the Blazing Fire.

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاء مِن مَّحَارِيبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ...

13. They worked for him as he desired, (making) Arches, Images,

C3806. Mihrab "(Plural Maharib), translated "arch", may be applied to any fine, elevated, spacious architectural structure.

As the reference here is to the Temple of Solomon, the word **"arches"** is I think most appropriate. **"Arches"** would be structural Ornaments in the Temple.

Images would be like the images of oxen and Cherubim mentioned in II. Chronicles, 4:3 and 3:14;

the Basons (II. Chronicles 4:22) were perhaps huge dishes round which many men could sit together and eat, according to ancient Eastern custom, while the cooking Cauldrons or Pots (II. Chronicles, 4:16), were fixed in one place, being so large in capacity that they could not be moved about.

Indian readers will get some idea of them from the huge cooking Degs, which they use in the festivals.

... وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَّاسِيَاتٍ...

Basins as large as Reservoirs, and (cooking) Cauldrons fixed (in their places):

... اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُودَ شُكْرًا...

"Work ye, sons of David, with thanks!

C3807. The building of the Temple was a great event in Israelite history. They are asked to be thankful without which all that glory and power would be out of place, and it fell away in a few generations, with the decline of the moral spirit which was at its back.

... وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ (١٣)

But few of My servants are grateful!"

فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ...

14. Then, when We decreed (Solomon's) death,

... مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَى مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنسَأَتَهُ...

nothing showed them his death except a little worm of the earth, which kept (slowly) gnawing away at his staff:

C3808. This allegory illustrates three points:

1. however great and glorious human power and grandeur may be, it is only for a time, and it may fade away even before people know of its decline;
2. the most remarkable events may be brought to light, not by a flourish of trumpets, but by a humble individual, unknown and unseen, who works imperceptibly and undermines even so strong a thing as staff, on which a great man may lean;
3. work done by men merely on the basis of brute Strength or fear, as in the case of the Jinns, will not endure.

This is brought up in strong contrast against the Power and Majesty of Allah, which will endure, which cannot be sapped, and which can only be fully appreciated by a training of the will and heart.

In the same way, in David's story above, his mighty strength as a warrior (see 2:251) and his skill in making armour are only to be valued when used, as it was used, in the service of Allah, in righteous works (34:11).

... فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ...

so when he fell down, the Jinns saw plainly

C3809. The Jinns looked upon their work as a Penalty, and so it became to them. The people who worked at the Temple of Solomon as the People of David worked and gloried in their work as a thanksgiving to Allah, and their work became sanctified.

The Jinns knew nothing of hidden secrets; they only saw the obvious, and had not even the significance of the little worm that slowly gnawed away Solomon's staff.

... أَن لَّوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ (١٤)

that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in the humiliating Penalty (of their Task).

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ...

15. There was, for Saba', aforetime, a Sign in their homeland --

C3810. This is the same city and territory in Yemen as is mentioned in 27:22: see note there as to its location.

There the period was the time of Solomon and Queen Bilqis.

Here it is some centuries later. It was still a happy and prosperous country, amply irrigated from the Maarib dam. Its roads or perhaps its canals, were skirted by gardens on both sides, right and left: at any given point, you always saw two gardens. It produced fruit, spices, and frankincense, and got the name of Araby the Blest for that part of the country.

... جَنَّتَانِ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ...

two Gardens to the right and to the left.

... كُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ...

Eat of the Sustenance (provided) by your Lord, and be grateful to Him:

... بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ... ...

a territory fair and happy,

... وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ (١٥)

and a Lord Oft-Forgiving!

C3811. The land was fair to look upon; the people happy and prosperous; and they enjoyed the blessings of Allah, Who is Gracious and does not punish small human faults or weaknesses.

فَأَعْرَضُوا...

16. But they turned away (from Allah),

... فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ ...

and We sent against them the flood

C3812. Into that happy Garden of Eden in Arabia Felix (Araby the Blest) came the insidious snake of Unfaith and Wrongdoing.

- Perhaps the people became arrogant of their prosperity, or of their science, or of their skill in irrigation engineering, in respect of the wonderful works of the Dam which their ancestors had constructed.

- Perhaps they got broken up into rich and poor, privileged and unprivileged, high-caste and low-caste, disregarding the gifts and closing the opportunities given by Allah to all His creatures.

- Perhaps they broke the laws of the very Nature which fed and sustained them.

The Nemesis came.

It may have come suddenly, or it may have come slowly. The pent-up waters of the eastern side of the Yemen highlands were collected in a high lake confined by the Dam of Maarib. A mighty flood came; the dam burst; and it has never been repaired since. Ibis was a spectacular crisis: it may have been preceded and followed by slow desiccation of the country.

... الْعَرِم...

(released) from the Dams,

C3813. "Arim" = Dams or Embankments, may have been a proper noun, or may simply mean the great earth-works fined with stone, which formed the Maarib dam, of which traces still exist.

The French traveler T.J. Arnaud saw the town and ruins of the Dam of Maarib in 1843, and described its gigantic works and its inscriptions: See Journal Asiatique for January 1874: the account is in French.

For a secondary account in English, see W.B. Harris. Journey Through Yemen, Edinburgh, 1893.

The dam as measured by Arnaud was two miles long and 120 ft. high. The date of its destruction was somewhere

about 120 A.D., though some authorities put it much later.

... وَبَدَّلْنَاهُم بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ...

and We converted their two Garden (rows)

... ذَوَاتَى أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثْلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ (١٦)

into "gardens" producing bitter fruit, and tamarisks, and some few (stunted) Lote trees.

C3814. The flourishing **"Garden of Arabia"** was converted into a waste.

- The luscious fruit trees became wild, or gave place to wild plants with bitter fruit.
- The feathery leaved tamarisk, which is only good for twigs and wattle-work, replaced the fragrant plants and flowers.
- Wild and stunted kinds of thorny bushes, like the wild Lote-tree, which were good for neither fruit nor shade, grew in place of the pomegranates, the date-palms and the grape-vines.

  The Lote-tree belongs to the family Rhamnaceae, Zizyphus Spina Christi, of which (it is supposed) Christ's crown of thorns was made, allied to the Zizyphus Jujuba, or ber tree of India.

  Wild, it is shrubby, thorny and useless. In cultivation it bears good fruit, and some shade, and can be thornless, thus becoming a symbol of heavenly bliss: 56:28.

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُم بِمَا كَفَرُوا...

17. That was the Requital We gave them because they ungratefully rejected Faith:

C3815. Kafar.- intensive form:

"those who deliberately and continuously reject Allah and are ungrateful for His Mercies, as shown by their constant wrong-doing.

... وَهَلْ نُجَازِي إِلَّا الْكَفُورَ (١٧)

and never do We give (such) requital except to such as are ungrateful rejecters.

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً...

18. Between them and the Cities on which We had poured Our blessings, We had placed Cities in prominent positions,

C3816. An instance is now given of the sort of covetousness on the part of the people of Saba, which ruined their prosperity and trade and cut their own throats.

The old Frankincense route was the great Highway (imam mubin 15:79; sabil muqim, 15:76) between Arabia and Syria. Through Syria it connected with the great and flourishing Kingdoms of the Euphrates and Tigris valleys on the one hand and Egypt on the other, and with the great Roman Empire round the Mediterranean.

At the other end, through the Yemen Coast, the road connected, by sea transport, with India, Malaya, and China. The Yemen-Syria road was much frequented, and Madain Salih was one of the stations on that route, and afterwards on the Pilgrim route: see Appendix No: 4 to Surah 26.

Syria was the land on which Allah **"had poured His blessings"**, being a rich fertile country, where Abraham had lived: it includes the Holy Land of Palestine. The route was studded in the days of its prosperity with many stations (cities) close to each other, on which merchants could travel with ease and safety, "by night and by day". The close proximity of stations prevented the inroads of highwaymen.

... وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ ...

and between them We had appointed stages of journey in due proportion:

... سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِينَ (١٨)

"Travel therein, secure, by night and by day."

... فَقَالُوا

19. But they said:

C3817. Said: in this and other places in the Quran, "language" is used for thought or deed, The Commentators call it the "language of actual facts" (zabdn hal) as opposed to the "language of words" (zabdn qal).

... رَبَّنَا بَاعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا...

"Our Lord! place longer distances between our journey-stages."

C3818. The covetous Saba people, in order to get more profit from travellers' supplies by concentrating them on a few stations which they could monopolise, tended to choke off traffic and ruin the big trade. Selfishness often runs counter to true self-interest.

It is a historical fact that the great Yemen-Syria route in Arabia declined with the decline of Yemen. There were no doubt physical causes, but supreme above all were the moral causes, the grasping nature of the people, and their departure from the highest standards of righteousness.

... وَظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ...

But they wronged themselves (therein).

... فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ ...

At length We made them as a tale (that is told),

C3819. The people of Saba were given every chance. They had prosperity, skill, trade and commerce, and a healthy and beautiful country.

They also had, apparently, great virtues, and as long as they remained true to their virtues, i.e., to the Law of Allah, they remained happy and contented. But when they became covetous and selfish, and became jealous of other people's prosperity instead of rejoicing in it, they fell from grace and declined.

It may be that the climate changed, the rainfall became scantier, perhaps on account of the cutting down of hill

forests; trade routes changed, on account of the people falling off in the virtues that make men popular: behind all the physical causes was the root-cause, that they began to worship mammon, self, greed, or materialism. They fell into the snare of Satan.

They gradually passed out of history, and became only a name in a story. Moral: it is only Allah's Mercy that can give true happiness or prosperity, and happiness or prosperity is only a snare unless used for the highest service of Allah and man.

... وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ...

and We dispersed them all in scattered fragments.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (١٩)

Verily in this are Signs for every (soul that is) patiently constant and grateful.

وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ...

20. And on them did Satan prove true his idea,

C3820. Cf. 17:62.

Satan out of arrogance had said, when he asked for respite from the Most High; "I will bring (Adam's) descendants under my sway, all but a few."

This was now proved true on the Saba people. He had no power to force them. It was their own will that went wrong and put them into his power.

... فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٠)

and they followed him, all but a Party that believed.

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ...

21. But he had no authority over them --

... إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ مِمَّنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ...

except that We might test the man who believes in the Hereafter from him who is in doubt concerning it:

C3821. Might test. - the word in the original is might know.

It is not that Allah does not know all. Why does He want to test?

It is in order to help us subjectively, to train our will, to put us definitely the question, "Will you obey Allah or other than Allah?"

Cf. n. 467 to 3:154.

... وَرَبُّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ (٢١)

and thy Lord doth watch over all things.

Section 3

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

22. Say: "Call upon other (gods) whom ye fancy, besides Allah:

C3822. Other objects of worship, such as Self, or Money, or Power, or things we imagine will bring us luck or prosperity, though they can do nothing of the kind.

... لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

they have no power -- not the weight of an atom -- in the heavens or on earth;

C3823. The false gods have no power whatever either in heaven or on earth, either in influencing our spiritual life or our ordinary worldly life.

To suppose that they have some share, or that they can give some help to Allah, even though Allah is Supreme, is both false and blasphemous.

Allah is One and Supreme, without sharer, helper, or equal.

... وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهِمَا مِن شِرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُم مِّن ظَهِيرٍ (٢٢)

no (sort of) share have they therein,

nor is any of them a helper to Allah.

وَلَا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِندَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ...

23. "No intercession can avail in His Presence except for **those** for whom He has granted permission.

C3824. Cf. 20:109, n. 2634, where I have explained the two possible modes of interpretation.

Each soul is individually and personally responsible. And if there is any intercession, it can only be by Allah's gracious permission. For the Day of judgment will be a terrible Day, or Day of Wrath (*Dies Irae*) according to the Latin hymn, when the purest souls will be stupefied at the manifestation of Allah's Power.

See next note.

... حَتَّى إِذَا فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

So far (is this the case) that, when terror is removed from their hearts

C3825. "Their hearts": the pronoun **"their"** is referred to the angels nearest to Allah.

On the Day of Judgment there will be such an irresistible manifestation of Power that even they will be silent for a while, and will scarcely realise what is happening. They will question each other, and only thus will they regain their bearings.

Or **"their"** may refer to those who seek intercession.

...قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ...

(at the Day of Judgement, then) will they say, 'What is it that your Lord commanded?'

C3826. In their mutual questionings they will realise that Allah's Judgment, as always, is right and just. Does this mean that no sort of intercession is required?

... قَالُوا الْحَقَّ...

They will say, 'That which is true and just;

... وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ (٢٣)

and He is the Most High, Most Great.'"

قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

24. Say: "Who gives you sustenance, from the heavens and the earth?"

C3827. There are six propositions introduced here with the word **"Say"**, at verses 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 30.

- They clearly explain the doctrine of Unity (verse 22),
- the Mercy of Allah (verse 24),
- man's Personal Responsibility (verse 25),
- the Final Justice of Allah (verse 26),
- Allah's Power and Wisdom (verse 27),
- and the Inevitability of the Judgment, by which true values will be restored (verse 30).

... قُلِ اللَّهُ...

Say: "It is Allah,

... وَإِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى أَوْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٤)

and certain it is that either we or ye are on right guidance or in manifest error!"

C3828. Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, are incompatible, one with another. In this matter we can make no compromise.

It is true that in men there may be various degrees of good or evil mixed together, and we have to tolerate men as our fellow-creatures, with all their faults and shortcomings. But this does not mean that we can worship Allah and Mammon together.

Wrong is the negation of Right as light is of darkness. Though there may be apparently varying depths of darkness, this is only due to the imperfection of our vision: it is varying strengths of light as perceived by our relative powers of sight. So we may perceive the Light of Allah in varying degrees according to our spiritual vision.

But in simple questions of Right or Wrong, we are faced by the Categorical Imperative.

قُل لَّا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا أَجْرَمْنَا وَلَا نُسْأَلُ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٥)

25. Say:

"Ye shall not be questioned as to our sins, nor shall we be questioned as to what ye do."

C3829. Therefore do not persecute us, or bring personal animus to bear on us. We must do our duty in declaring the universal Message, which is for you as much as for us.

قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ...

26. Say:

"Our Lord will gather us together and will in the end decide the matter between us (and you) in truth and justice:

C3830. Human controversies are vain and inconclusive. If you put your trust in Allah and we put our trust in Allah, we belong to one Brotherhood, and we shall see the perfect Truth finally when the Time comes.

... وَهُوَ الْفَتَّاحُ الْعَلِيمُ (٢٦)

and He is the One to decide, the One Who knows all."

قُلْ أَرُونِيَ الَّذِينَ أَلْحَقْتُم بِهِ شُرَكَاءَ...

27. Say:

"Show me those whom ye have joined with Him as partners:

... كَلَّا ...

by no means (can ye).

... بَلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٧)

Nay,

He is Allah, the Exalted in Power, the Wise."

C3831. Wisdom and Power only belong to Allah. If you put your trust in other things, they will fail you, because they do not exist-as objects of worship.

All else that you set your hearts upon will and must fail you, because they cannot in any wise be brought into rivalry with Allah.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا...

28. We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin),

C3832. Allah's Revelation, through the holy Prophet, was not meant for one family or tribe, one race or set of people. It was meant for all mankind, to whom, if they turn to Allah, it is a Message of the glad tidings of His Mercy, and if they do not turn to Him, it is a warning against sin and the inevitable Punishment.

That the Punishment does not come immediately (as far as they perceive) is no reason for doubting it. It has been declared in clear and unequivocal terms, and nothing can be more certain.

Why delay?

Why ask carping questions?

Why not profit by the Message, turn to Allah in repentance, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness?

... وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٨)

but most men understand not.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٩)

29. They say: "When will this promise (come to pass) if ye are telling the truth?"

قُل لَّكُم مِّيعَادُ يَوْمٍ لَّا تَسْتَأْخِرُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُونَ (٣٠)

30. Say:

"The appointment to you is for a day, which ye cannot put back for an hour nor put forward."

C3833. When that Day actually arrives, your period of probation will have passed. It will be too late. Now is the time for action and spiritual profit.

C.191 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(34:31-54)

Unfaith has no stable foundations to rest on;
Misleaders and misled will all be responsible
For their deeds. true values are not to be judged
By the seeming good of this Life; true Good
Will come to its own in the End, however
Derided and scorned in the period of Trial.
Revelation and the Mission of the men of Allah
Will stand every test. Allah's truth will endure,
While Falsehood will perish, and its votaries find
The door of Repentance closed in the End.

Section 4

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَن نُّؤْمِنَ بِهَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ...

31. The Unbelievers say: "We shall neither believe in this scripture nor in (any) that (came) before it."

C3834. To the Pagans all scriptures are taboo, whether it be the Quran or any Revelation that came before it.

The people of the Book despised the Pagans, but in their arrogant assumption of superiority, prevented them, by their example, from accepting the latest and most universal Scripture when it came in the form of the Quran. This relative position, of men who fancy themselves on their knowledge, and men whom they despise but exploit and mislead, always exists on this earth.

I have mentioned the people of the Book and the Pagan Arabs merely by way of illustration.

... وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ مَوْقُوفُونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ...

Couldst thou but see when the wrongdoers will be made to stand before their Lord,

... يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ الْقَوْلَ...

throwing back the word (of blame) on one another!

C3835. One disbelief is as bad as another. There is little to choose between them. But when the final account will be taken, there will be mutual recriminations between the one and the other.

... يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا ...

Those who had been despised will say to the arrogant ones:

C3836. The Pagans will naturally say to the people of the Book:

"You misled us; you had previous Revelations, and you should have known how Allah sent His Messengers; had it not been for your bad example, we should have received Allah's Revelation and become Believers."

Or the humble followers will say this to their leaders, or those less gifted will say to those by whom they were misled and exploited.

The dichotomy is between such as pretentiously held their heads high in the world and such as they profited by but held in contempt.

... لَوْلَا أَنتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ (٣١)

"Had it not been for you, we should certainly have been believers!"

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا...

32. The arrogant ones will say to those who had been despised:

... أَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدَى بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَكُم...

"Was it we who kept you back from Guidance after it reached you?

... بَلْ كُنتُم مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣٢)

Nay, rather, it was ye who transgressed."

C3837. In the mutual reproaches between the misleaders and the misled ones, there will be a grain of

truth on both sides, and yet both were guilty in not realising their own personal responsibility.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا...

33. Those who had been despised will say to the arrogant ones:

... بَلْ مَكْرُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ...

"Nay! it was a plot (of yours) by day and by night.

C3838. The more intelligent ones who exploit the weaker ones are constantly plotting night and day to keep the latter ignorant and under their thumb. They show them the ways of Evil, because by that means they are more in their power.

... إِذْ تَأْمُرُونَنَا أَن نَّكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ أَندَادًا ...

Behold! ye (constantly) ordered us to be ungrateful to Allah and to attribute equals to Him!"

C3839. If all men worshipped the true God, and none but Him, they could not on the one hand be trampled upon, and on the other hand they could not be unjust. It is in the worship of false ideals or false gods that alluring structures of fraud and injustice ate built up.

... وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ...

They will declare (their) repentance when they see the Penalty:

C3840. Cf. 10:54, and n. 1445.

All these mutual recriminations would be swallowed up in the general realisation of the Truth by both sides in the Hereafter. They would be prepared openly to declare their repentance, but it would be too late. The yoke of slavery to Evil will be on their necks.

Allah's justice put it there, but what else could it do?

Their own sins will cry out against them and hold them under their yokes.

... وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَغْلَالَ فِي أَعْنَاقِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

We shall put yokes on the necks of the Unbelievers:

... هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٣)

it would only be a requital for their (ill) deeds.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا...

34. Never did We send a Warner to a population, but the wealthy ones among them said:

C3841. Whenever the Message of Allah comes, the vested interests range themselves against it. Worldly power has made them arrogant; worldly pleasures have deadened their sensibility to Truth. They reject the Message because it attacks their false position.

... إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٣٤)

"We believe not in the (message) with which ye have been sent."

وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ أَكْثَرُ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَادًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ (٣٥)

35. They said: "We have more in wealth and in sons, and we cannot be punished."

C3842. Their arrogance is openly based on their worldly power and position, their family influence, and the strength of their man-power,

Turn back again to the contrast drawn between the arrogant ones and those whom they despised, in verses 31-33.

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ...

36. Say:

"Verily my Lord enlarges and restricts the provision to whom He pleases,

C3843. Provision (or Sustenance): good things of all kinds in this life, material goods as well as power, opportunities, influence, mental gifts, etc.

These do not necessarily all go to the good, nor is their denial to be interpreted to mean that it is a withdrawal of Allah's favour. Very often the contrary is the case. Their distribution is in accordance with the Universal Plan and

Purpose, which is all-wise and all-good. But ignorant people cannot understand this.

... وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٦)

but most men understand not."

Section 5

وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُم بِالَّتِي تُقَرِّبُكُمْ عِندَنَا زُلْفَى...

37. It is not your wealth nor your sons, that will bring you nearer to Us in degree:

C3844. The true test of progress in spiritual life is to be measured by other things than material wealth and influence. What we have to ask ourselves is:

are we the least bit nearer to Allah?

... إِلَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَاءُ الضِّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوا...

but only those who believe and work Righteousness -- these are the ones for whom there is a multiplied Reward for their deeds,

C3845. Cf. 30:39.

All worldly good is but a shadow that will pass away. Its intrinsic and eternal value is small. But those who work righteousness in Faith are on the true path of self-development. The reward they will get will be infinitely more than their merits entitle them to. For they will partake of the boundless Bounties of Allah.

... وَهُمْ فِي الْغُرُفَاتِ آمِنُونَ (٣٧)

while secure they (reside) in the dwellings on high!

C3846. Their happiness will not only be great in quantity **("multiplied")**, but it will be of a specially sublime quality **("dwellings on high")**, and it will endure without any chance of its loss or diminution **("secure they reside")**.

وَالَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعَاجِزِينَ أُوْلَئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ (٣٨)

38. Those who strive against Our Signs, to frustrate them, will be given over into Punishment.

C3847. Cf. 34:5, where the argument was urged that human efforts to defeat Allah's Plan will only bring humiliation to those who indulge in them.

Here the argument is rounded off by the statement that such efforts, besides their failure, will land them in an abyss of punishment contrasted with the "dwellings on high" of the blessed ones.

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ...

39. Say:

"Verily my Lord enlarges and restricts the Sustenance to such of His servants as He pleases:

C3848. Cf. 34:36 above, and n. 3843.

... لَهُ وَمَا أَنفَقْتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ ...

and nothing do ye spend in the least (in his cause) but He replaces it:

... وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (٣٩)

for He is the Best of those Who grant Sustenance.

C3849. Even in the seeming inequality of distribution of the good things of life, Allah has a wise and merciful purpose; for nothing arises by chance.

He is the best to give us, now and evermore, just those things which subserve our real needs and advance our inner development.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ...

40. One day He will gather them all together, and say to the angels,

C3850. Here we have the case of the worship of angels or supposed Powers of Allah, or supposed beneficent

spirits that men turn to instead of worshipping the true God. In fact these are mere names to the false worshippers. It is not the Good that they worship but the Evil, which leads them astray.

... أَهَٰؤُلَآءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (٤٠)

"Was it you that these men used to worship?"

...قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِن دُونِهِم

41. They will say,

"Glory to thee! Our (tie) is with thee -- as Protector -- not with them.

C3851. Wali in Arabic may mean Friend either in the sense of Protector and Benefactor or in the sense of the Beloved.

The tie of benevolence, confidence, and friendship is implied, either active or passive.

The angels first proclaim their dependence on Allah and their need of His protection, and then disclaim any idea of their having protected or encouraged the false worshippers to worship beings other than Allah.

They go further, and suggest that when men pretended to worship angels, they worshipped, not angels, but Jinns. See next note.

... بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ...

Nay, but they worshipped the Jinns:

C3852. Jinns: see 6:100 and n. 929.

The false worshippers pretended to worship the bright and radiant angels of good, but in reality worshipped the dark and hidden forces of evil,-in the life around them.

They trusted and believed in such forces of evil, although such forces of evil had really no power.

... أَكْثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤْمِنُونَ (٤١)

most of them believed in them."

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يَمْلِكُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَّفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا...

42. So on that day no power shall they have over each other, for profit or harm:

... وَنَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنتُم بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ (٤٢)

and We shall say to the wrongdoers,

"Taste ye the penalty of the Fire -- the which ye were wont to deny!"

C3853. The supposed "rivals" of Allah-the false things whereon men set their hopes and fears-will have no power whatever when true values are restored; and the Fire-the Penalty-which they doubted or derided, will become the dominating real thing in their experience.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ...

43. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them,

...قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُرِيدُ أَن يَصُدَّكُمْ عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُكُمْ...

they say, "This is only a man who wishes to hinder you from the (worship) which your fathers practiced."

C3854. Apart from the worship of Evil in the guise of the Powers of Light, there is another form of false worship, which depends on ancestral tradition. "Why" it is said "should we not do as our fathers did?"

They reject a new prophet of Truth simply because his teaching does not agree with the ways of their ancestors. The answer to this is given in verse 44 below. But meanwhile the rejecters' objection to new Truth is stated in three forms:

1. our ancestors knew nothing of this;
2. the story of inspiration is false;

   it is merely an invention;

   we do not believe in inspiration;
3. when in some particular points, the new Truth does work wonders in men's hearts, they account for it by saying it is magic.

'The third objection is merely traditional.

What is magic?

If it was merely deception, surely the Truth has proved itself to be above deception.

The second objection is answered by the fact that the Messenger who comes with new spiritual Truth is acknowledged to be truthful in other relations of life: why should he be false where his preaching brings him no gain but much sorrow and persecution?

For the ancestral objection see next note.

... وَقَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ مُّفْتَرًى ...

And they say, "This is only a falsehood invented!"

...وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٤٣)

And the Unbelievers say of the Truth when it comes to them,

"This is nothing but evident magic!"

...وَمَا آتَيْنَاهُم مِّن كُتُبٍ يَدْرُسُونَهَا

44. But We had not given them Books which they could study,

... وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِن نَّذِيرٍ (٤٤)

nor sent messengers to them before thee as Warners.

C3855. The ancestors (as in the case of the Arabs of the Times of Ignorance) had received no revelation of the dear kind which a messenger and a Book bring them. This is a reason for welcoming, not for rejecting new Truth.

...وَكَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ

45. And their predecessors rejected (the Truth);

... وَمَا بَلَغُوا مِعْشَارَ مَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوا رُسُلِي...

these have not received a tenth of what We had granted to those: yet when they rejected My messengers,

C3856. Passing to Peoples before the immediate ancestors, the People of the Book, or the People of Saba and 'Ad and Thamud, had received favours and gifts, power and wealth, ten times more than were enjoyed by the Pagan Quraish. Yet when they turned away from Allah's Truth, Allah turned away from them, and what terrible consequences descended on them when they lost Allah's Grace! This should make everyone humble, not least the posterity of Muhammad the Messenger if they forsake Allah's Truths! For they have received a higher Teaching!

... فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٤٥)

how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)!

Section 6

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعِظُكُم بِوَاحِدَةٍ...

46. Say:

"I do admonish you on one point:

... أَن تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَثْنَى وَفُرَادَى ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوا...

that ye do stand up before Allah -- (it may be) in pairs, or (it may be) singly -- and reflect (within yourselves):

C3857. A crowd mentality is not the best for the perception of the final spiritual truths. For these, it is necessary that each soul should commune within itself with earnest sincerity as before Allah: if it requires a Teacher, let it seek out one, or it may be that it wants the strengthening of the inner convictions that dawn on it, by the support of a sympathizer or friend. But careful and heart-felt reflection is necessary to appraise the higher Truths.

... مَا بِصَاحِبِكُم مِّن جِنَّةٍ...

your Companion is not possessed:

C3858. Note that in verses 46, 47, 48, 49 and 50, arguments are suggested to the Prophet, by which he

can convince any right-thinking man of his sincerity and truth.

Here the argument is that he is not possessed or out of his mind. If he is different from ordinary men, it is because he has to give a warning of a terrible spiritual danger to the men whom he loves but who will not understand his Message.

... إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لَّكُم بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ (٤٦)

he is no less than a Warner to you, in face of a terrible Penalty."

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُم مِّنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ...

47. Say:

"No reward do I ask of you:

it is (all) in your interest:

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ...

my reward is only due from Allah:

C3859. Cf. 10:72.

The second argument is that he has nothing to gain from them. His message is for their own good. He is willing to suffer persecution and insult, because he has to fulfil his mission from Allah.

... وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٤٧)

and He is Witness to all things."

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ (٤٨)

48. Say:

"Verily my Lord doth cast the (mantle of) Truth (over His servants) -- He that has full knowledge of (all) that is hidden."

C3860. Allah's **Truth** is so vast that no man in this life can compass the whole of it. But Allah in His mercy selects His servants on whom it is cast like a mantle. They see enough to be able to teach their fellow men. It is through that mantle-that mission received from Allah-that a messenger can speak with authority to men, and this is his third argument.

قُلْ جَاء الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ (٤٩)

49. Say: "The Truth has arrived, and Falsehood neither creates anything new, nor restores anything."

C3861. The fourth argument is that the Truth is final: it does not come and go: it creates new situations and new developments, and if by chance it seems to be defeated for a time, it comes back and restores the true balance;- unlike Falsehood, which by its very nature is doomed to perish: 17:81.

The Prophet's credentials are known by the test of Time. This was already becoming apparent to discerning eyes when this Surah was revealed in Makkah, but it became clear to the whole world with the story of Islam's progress in Madinah.

قُلْ إِن ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَا أَضِلُّ عَلَى نَفْسِي...

50. Say: "If I am astray, I only stray to the loss of my own soul:

...وَإِنِ اهْتَدَيْتُ فَبِمَا يُوحِي إِلَيَّ رَبِّي...

but if I receive guidance, it is because of the inspiration of my Lord to me:

C3862. If it could possibly be supposed that the Prophet was a self-deceived visionary, it would affect him only, and could not fail to appear in his personality. But in fact he was steady in his constancy and Faith, and he not only went from strength to strength, but won the enduring and whole-hearted love and devotion of his nearest and dearest and of those who most came into contact with him. How was this possible, unless he had the Truth and the inspiration of Allah behind him? 'Ibis is the fifth and last argument in this passage.

... إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ (٥٠)

it is He Who hears all things, and is (ever) near."

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ فَزِعُوا فَلَا فَوْتَ وَأُخِذُوا مِن مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ (٥١)

51. If thou couldst but see when they will quake with terror:

but then there will be no escape (for them), and they will be seized from a position (quite) near.

C3863. After the arguments for the reality and triumph of Truth, we are asked to contemplate the position of the opposers of Truth when Truth is established. They will be struck with terror: for Truth is all-compelling. They will wish they could get away from that position, but that would be impossible.

They will not be able to move far; they will be held fast to the consequences of their own earlier conduct. They will be caught quite close to the point of their departure from Truth.

وَقَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ...

52. And they will say, "We do believe (now) in the (truth)":

... وَأَنَّىٰ لَهُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِن مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٢)

but how could they receive (faith) from a position (so) far off --

C3864. They will now profess their faith in Truth, but of what value will such profession be?

Faith is a belief in things unseen: now everything is plain and open before them. The position in which they could have received Faith is left far off behind them, when Truth was struggling and asked for help or asylum, and they cruelly, arrogantly, insultingly repudiated Truth.

وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِهِ مِن قَبْلُ...

53. Seeing that they did reject faith (entirely) before,

... وَيَقْذِفُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٣)

and that they (continually) cast (slanders) on the Unseen from a position far off?

C3865. Not only did they reject the Truth of the Unseen (the true Reality), but they spread all sorts of false and malicious insinuations at the preachers of Truth, calling them dishonest men, liars, hypocrites, and so on.

They did it like a coward taking up a sneaking position far from the fight and speeding arrows at a distant target.

وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ ...

54. And between them and their desires, is placed a barrier,

C3866. What they desire is to suppress Truth and to indulge in the satisfaction of their own evil, selfish motives.

They will be baulked in both, and that itself will be their anguish and punishment. That has always been the law in the eternal struggle between Right and Wrong. All partisans of such narrow cliques have always suffered the same fate.

... كَمَا فُعِلَ بِأَشْيَاعِهِم مِّن قَبْلُ...

as was done in the past with their partisans:

C3867. Note that verses 51-54 are a powerful description of the conflict between right and wrong, and may be understood in many meanings.

1. The description applies to the position in the final Hereafter, as compared with the position in this life.
2. It applies to the position of triumphant Islam in Madinah and later as compared with the position of persecuted Islam in its early days in Makkah.
3. It applies to the reversal of the position of right and wrong at various phases of the world's history,
4. or of individual history.

... إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ مُّرِيبٍ (٥٤)

for they were indeed in suspicious (disquieting) doubt.

C3868. Cf. 14:9, and see n. 1884.

الحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الحَزَنَ إِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ

All the praises and thanks be to Allâh, Who has removed from us (all) grief. Verily, our Lord is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (good deeds and to recompense).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Fatir

فَاطِر

Introduction and Summary

See Introduction to Surah 34.

This Surah deals with the mystery of Creation and its maintenance, with various forces typified by the wings of Angels. Whether we look to outer nature or to man. Allah's Grace proclaims His Glory, and protects His votaries from Evil.

It is an early Makkan Surah, but its chronology has no significance.

Summery- The forces which maintain Creation, as typified by angels, were themselves created by Allah, to Whom alone all praise is due; all else is naught (35:1-26, and C. 192).

All good is from Allah; who then will choose Evil, and reach the doom that goes with Evil? (35:27-45, and C. 193).

C.192 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(35:1-26)

Allah is the source of All things; all Power,
Wisdom, Beauty, and Truth flow from Him.
It is Evil that deceives and plots in the dark.
All knowledge is with Allah. The things
That are good and pure and true are not
As the things that are evil, deceitful, and false.
Allah is free of all needs: it is we
That need Him: let us seek His love and live,
His Message will save us from wrong, while dark
Is the fate of those who reject Him.
Praise and glory to Him, the Cherisher of all!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ...

1. Praise be to Allah,

C3869. See n. 3785 to 34:1.

When we praise Allah, it means that we understand and bring to mind that His glory and power are exercised for the good of His Creation, and this is the subject-matter of the Surah.

... فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

Who created (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth,

C3870. As man's knowledge of the processes of nature advances, he sees how complex is the evolution of matter itself, leaving out the question of the origin of Life and the spiritual forces, which are beyond the ken of experimental science.

But this knowledge itself becomes a sort of "veil of Light": man becomes so conscious of the proximate causes, that he is apt, in his pride, to forget the primal Cause, the ultimate hand of Allah in Creation.

And then, creation is such a complex process: see some of the ideas involved explained by different words in n. 120 to 2:117.

The word **fatara** here used means the creation of primeval matter, to which further creative processes have to be added by the hand of Allah, or Allah "adds to His Creation as He pleases", not only in quantity, but in qualities, functions, relations and variations in infinite ways.

... جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ...

Who made the angels messengers with wings -- two, or three, or four (Pairs):

C3871. They are Messengers or Instruments of Allah's Will, and may have a few or numerous Errands entrusted to them.

Cf. the description of the Spirit of Inspiration in 26:193, and of the spirits or angels for executing the Commands of Allah in 79:1-5.

... يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ... ...

He adds to Creation as He pleases:

C3872. See n. 3870 above, where the complexities of the creative processes is referred to Allah's creation did not stop at some past time: it continues, for He has all power, and His mercies are ever poured forth without stint.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١)

for Allah has power over all things.

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِن رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا...

2. What Allah out of His Mercy doth bestow on mankind there is none can withhold:

... وَمَا يُمْسِكْ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ ...

what He doth withhold, there is none can grant, apart from Him:

C3873. As Allah is the Creator and Sustainer of all beings and things, so does His kindness extend to all Creatures.

No one can intercept Allah's mercies and gifts. Whatever is His Will and Plan and Purpose He can and does carry out. And if from any creature He withholds any particular gifts, there is no other person or power that can give those gifts. But such withholding is not arbitrary. He is full of wisdom and goodness, and every act of His, whether He withholds or gives, is full of kindness and mercy to His creatures.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢)

and He is the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ...

3. O men! call to mind the grace of Allah unto you!

... هَلْ مِنْ خَالِقٍ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

Is there a Creator, other than Allah, to give you Sustenance from heaven or earth?

C3874. As the primal Cause of all things is Allah, an appeal is made to man to turn to Allah instead of running after false fancies. Allah is not only the source, but the centre of all life and activity, and all affairs return to Him. The world is sustained, and human life is sustained, by Allah's grace and providence.

"Sustenance" is to be taken, in Quranic language, for all that helps to maintain and develop every aspect of

life, physical and spiritual. It would be the height of folly, then, for man to ignore Allah's gracious Message, as explained in His Revelation.

... لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ...

There is no god but He:

... فَأَنَّىٰ تُؤْفَكُونَ (٣)

how then are ye deluded away from the Truth?

وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ...

4. And if they reject thee, so were messengers rejected before thee:

C3875. And yet there will be human perversity which will reject the True and accept the False.

The prophet of Allah is not discouraged by this, as everything ultimately returns to Allah, and we must trust to His Wisdom in His Universal Plan. (R).

... وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (٤)

to Allah go back for decision all affairs.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

5. O men!

certainly the promise of Allah is true.

C3876. In verse 3 above the appeal was on the basis of the Past and the Present: now the appeal is on the basis of the Future.

- Allah's grace has promised us the Garden of Bliss;
- His justice has promised us the Fire of Suffering.

Both promises are certain to be fulfilled. On which side shall we range ourselves?

... فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا...

Let not then this present life deceive you,

C3877. Cf. 31:33 and n. 3624.

The deception of Evil takes two forms.

1. The seductive temptations of this world may deceive us into forgetting the Hereafter.
2. The Arch-Enemy himself may so blind our vision that we may say with him, "Evil! be thou my good!"

We may be misled by easy stages. Are we on our guard?

... وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ (٥)

nor let the Chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا...

6. Verily Satan is an enemy to you: so treat him as an enemy.

C3878. Evil is our enemy and should be treated as such.

It is really foreign to our nature, however much it may disguise itself to deceive us as our friend, or a part of our own nature.

Personifying the Spirit of Evil, we may say that he wants us to share in his own damnation.

Shall we allow ourselves to fall into his snare?

... إِنَّمَا يَدْعُو حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (٦)

He only invites his adherents, that they may become Companions of the Blazing Fire.

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ...

7. For those who reject Allah, is a terrible Penalty:

C3879. To reject Allah is to reject all the good which He has implanted in our nature.

Are we going to be false to the true Pattern according to which He created us, and suffer the consequences?

Or are we going to be true to that Pattern and achieve the high and noble Destiny intended for us?

... وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧)

but for those who believe and work righteous deeds, is Forgiveness, and a magnificent Reward.

أَفَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا...

8. Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good (equal to one who is rightly guided)?

C3880. Cf. n. 3877 above.

When a stage is reached at which a man accepts Evil as his Good, his case is hopeless.

Can such a man profit by preaching or guidance?

He has himself deliberately rejected all guidance. Such a man is best left to stray. Perhaps, even in the paths in which he is straying, some sudden flash of light may come to him! That may be as Allah wills in His holy and wise Purpose and Plan.

... فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاء...

For Allah leaves to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills.

... وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاء فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرَاتٍ...

So let not thy soul go out in (vainly) sighing after them:

But the prophet of Allah is not to worry or feel disheartened by such men's attitude. He must go on tilling the soil that is open to him. For Allah's Plan may work in all sorts of unexpected ways, as in the allegory in the next verse. (R).

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ (٨)

for Allah knows well all that they do!

وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيَاحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا...

9. It is Allah Who sends forth the Winds, so that they raise up the Clouds,

C3881. The allegory here is double.

1. Dry, unpromising soil may seem to all intents and purposes dead;

there is no source of water near; moisture is sucked up by the sun's heat in a far-off ocean, and clouds are formed;

winds arise; it seems as if the wind "bloweth as it listeth", but it is really Allah's Providence that drives it to the dead land;

the rain falls, and behold! there is life and motion and beauty everywhere!

So in the spiritual world, Allah's Revelation is His Mercy and His Rain; there may be the individual resurrection (**Nushur**) or unfolding of a soul.

2. So again, may be the general Resurrection (**Nushur**), the unfolding of a new World in the Hereafter, out of an old World that is folded up and dead (Takwir, Surah 81).

... فَسُقْنَاهُ إِلَى بَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ...

and We drive them to a Land that is dead,

... فَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

and revive the earth therewith after its death:

... كَذَٰلِكَ النُّشُورُ (٩)

even so (will be) the Resurrection!

مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا...

10. If any do seek for glory and power -- to Allah belong all glory and power.

C3882. Good and Evil are to be distinguished sharply. No good is ever lost: it goes up to Allah. The humblest Good, in word or deed, is exalted to high rank. If man seeks for mere glory and power, there is no such thing apart from Allah. But seeking Allah, we attain to the highest glory and power.

... إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ...

To Him mount up (all) Words of Purity:

it is He Who exalts each Deed of Righteousness.

... وَالَّذِينَ يَمْكُرُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ...

Those that lay Plots of Evil -- for them is a Penalty terrible;

C3883. It is the nature of Evil to work underground, to hide from the Light, to plot against Righteousness; but Evil inevitably carries its own punishment. Its plots must fail miserably. And eventually Evil itself is to be blotted out.

... وَمَكْرُ أُوْلَٰئِكَ هُوَ يَبُورُ (١٠)

and the plotting of such will be void (of result).

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ ...

11. And Allah did create you from dust;

C3884. Cf. 18:37 and n. 2379; 22:5 and n. 2773; and 30:20, and n. 3524.

Here the argument is that

- man's physical origin is lowly:
- his physical body is but dust;
- his life-sperm issues from a part of his body which he hides and considers as a place of shame; and
- the mystery of sex shows that no one individual among mankind is sufficient in himself.

Glory and power and knowledge are not in him, but in Allah, from Whom alone he derives any glory, or power, or knowledge that he possesses.

... ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا...

then from a sperm-drop; then He made you in pairs.

C3885. "Then" in this and the following clause refers, not to stages of time, but to stages in the argument.

It is almost equivalent to "further", "also", and "in addition".

... وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنثَىٰ وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ...

And no female conceives, or lays down (her load), but with His knowledge.

... وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِن مُّعَمَّرٍ وَلَا يُنقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ...

Nor is a man long-lived granted length of days, nor is a part cut off from his life, but is in a Decree (ordained).

C3886. Things that appear most secret and mysterious to man are all known and ordained by Allah. They are all subject to Allah's Laws and Decrees.

The mystery of human birth (see n. 3625 to 31:34), the mystery of sex, the mystery of Life and Death and many other things, seem to man inexplicable. But they are all ordained by Allah, and their reasons are fully known to Him.

... إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (١١)

All this is easy for Allah.

C3887. Man's knowledge may be acquired laboriously and may be a burden to him. Allah's knowledge is different; it is not task or burden to Him. Cf. 33:19, 30.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ...

12. Nor are the two bodies of flowing water alike --

C3888. See 25:53 and notes 3111 and 3112.

The great salt Ocean with its seas and gulfs is all one: and the great masses of sweet water in rivers, lakes, ponds, and underground springs are also one: and each is connected with the other by the constant circulation going on, which sucks up vapours, carries them about in clouds or atmospheric moisture, and again brings them condensed into water or snow or hail to mingle with rivers and streams and get back into the Ocean.

... هَٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ...

the one palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink,

... وَهَٰذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ...

and the other, salty and bitter.

... وَمِن كُلٍّ تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا ...

Yet from each (kind of water) do ye eat flesh fresh and tender,

C3889. For this whole passage see 16:14 and notes 2034 and 2035.

Both from the sea and from rivers and lakes we get fish, of which some kinds have a flesh particularly fresh and tender, and of a most delicate flavour.

... وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا...

and ye extract ornaments to wear;

C3890. Such as pearls and coral from the sea, and such delicately tinted stones as the Aqiq (carnelian), the agate, the goldstone, or other varieties of quartz pebbles found in river-beds, and considered as gems. Many such are found in the Ken river in Banda District (in India).

Some river sands also yield minute quantities of gold. In large navigable rivers and big Lakes like those of North America, as well as in the sea, there are highways for shipping and commerce. (R).

... وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢)

and thou seest the ships therein that plough the waves, that ye may seek (thus) of the Bounty of Allah that ye may be grateful.

يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ...

13. He merges Night into Day, and He merges Day into Night,

C3891. Cf. 22:61.

The phases of Light in nature may have other uses. But for man they mark periods of rest and activity, and have great influence on his physical, moral, and spiritual life.

... وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

and He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His Law): each one runs its course for a term appointed.

C3892. Cf. 13:2.

The sun and the moon mark phases of light, and serve man during the periods of the day and the night.

The sun marks the seasons, and is the source of heat and energy and physical life for the whole solar system.

The sun and the moon run according to fixed laws, and they will continue to do so, not for ever, but for the period appointed for their duration by Allah.

... ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ...

Such is Allah your Lord: to Him belongs all Dominion.

C3893. Allah's might and majesty, and Allah's goodness and wisdom, having been shown by a few examples, it follows that it is folly to seek or worship any other power but Allah. It only throws off man into false paths, and takes him farther and farther away from the Truth.

... وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِن قِطْمِيرٍ (١٣)

And those whom ye invoke besides Him have not the least power.

C3894. Qitmir: the thin, white skin that covers the date-stone. It has neither strength nor texture, and has no value whatever.

Any one relying on any power other than that of Allah relies on nothing whatever. The **Qitmir** is worse than the proverbial "broken reed".

Cf. 4:53 and 4:124, where the word naqir, 'the groove in a date-stone', is used similarly for a thing of no value or significance.

إِن تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَاءَكُمْ...

14. If ye invoke them, they will not listen to your call,

... وَلَوْ سَمِعُوا مَا اسْتَجَابُوا لَكُمْ...

and if they were to listen, they cannot answer your (prayer).

C3895. False or imaginary objects of worship serve no purpose whatever. They cannot hear; if they could hear, they could not grant prayers or petitions.

In fact, if they are real creatures, such as angels or deified human beings, they will very rightly repudiate any such worship as brings them into competition or "partnership" with Allah.

See next note.

... وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُونَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ...

On the Day of Judgement they will reject your "Partnership."

C3896. Cf. 10:28 and n. 1418; also 34:40-41.

No false ideas or false impressions will remain when true values are restored. Why not then accept the Truth now in this life, and get on to the true path of Grace?

... وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيرٍ (١٤)

And none (O man!) can tell thee (the Truth) like the One Who is acquainted with all things.

C3897. None can tell you the Truth better than He Who is All-Wise and All-knowing. Why not accept His Message and receive His guidance?

Section 3

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ...

15. O ye men! it is ye that have need of Allah:

... وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (١٥)

but Allah is the One Free of all wants, Worthy of all praise.

C3898. What is man that Allah should care for him, instruct him, and send him special messengers to warn him of danger and harm?

It is man that depends on Allah and has need of Him every moment of his life. Allah has no need of him, but He bestows His Grace on him as on all His creatures, out of His unbounded Mercy and loving-kindness.

If it were Allah's Will, He could blot out man for his rebellion and create an entirely new world.

إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (١٦)

16. If He so pleased, He could blot you out and bring in a New Creation:

وَمَا ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ (١٧)

17. Nor is that (at all) difficult for Allah.

C3899. There is no limit to Allah's creative power, nor is His creative energy anything rare or unusual. This is the force of the word **'aziz** here.

Allah's creative energy is exercised every moment, and it is the normal condition in the universe.

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ...

18. Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another's burden.

C3900. Bearer: hamilatun: feminine in Arabic, as referring to the soul (nafs), as in 6:164.

... وَإِن تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ حِمْلِهَا لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ...

If one heavily laden should call another to (bear) his load, not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other), even though he be nearly related.

C3901. Natural relationship may be considered as a reasonable cause or opportunity for bearing each other's burdens. For example, a mother or a father might offer to die for her or his child, and vice versa. But this does not apply to spiritual matters. There the responsibility is strictly personal and cannot be transferred to another.

In 29:13 we are told that the misleaders "will bear other burdens along with their own"; but the context shows that the "other" burdens are the burdens of deluding others with their falsehoods. Both sins are their own, viz., their original sin, and the sin of deluding the others. But the responsibility will be doubled.

... إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ ...

Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord unseen

C3902. Bil-gaibi: unseen in the adverbial sense.

The man, who, though he does not see Allah, so realises Allah's Presence in himself as if he saw Him, is the man of genuine Faith, and for him Allah's Revelation comes through many channels and is always fruitful.

... وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ...

and establish regular Prayer

C3903. Prayer is one of the means of purifying ourselves of lower motives in life, for in prayer we seek the Presence of Allah.

... وَمَن تَزَكَّى فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّى لِنَفْسِهِ ...

and whoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his own soul;

But the purity which we seek is for our own souls: we confer no favour on Allah or on any Power in the spiritual world, as some imagine who make "gifts" to Allah. In any case the destination of all is to Allah.

... وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ (١٨)

and the destination (of all) is to Allah.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ (١٩)

19. The blind and the seeing are not alike;

C3904. Now we are offered some contrasts between those who obey Allah's Law and are thus citizens of Allah's Kingdom and those who are rebels against Allah's Kingdom and are thus outlaws.

How can they be considered alike?

The godly are like those who see, as contrasted with those who are blind; and their motives and actions are like the purest and highest Light, contrasted with the depths of darkness; or,

to take another metaphor, their lives are like the genial and warmth-giving heat of the sun, which benefits all who come within its influence, contrasted with the chilly shadows of gloom in which no vegetation flourishes. (R).

وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ (٢٠)

20. Nor are the depths of Darkness and the Light;

وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ (٢١)

21. Nor are the (chilly) shade and the (genial) heat of the sun:

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاء وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ...

22. Nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead.

C3905. The final contrast is between the Living and the Dead;

those whose future has in it the promise of growth and fulfilment, and those who are inert and on the road to perish.

With Allah everything is possible: He can give Life to the Dead. But the human Teacher should not expect that people who are (spiritually) dead and buried will by any chance hear his call.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاء...

Allah can make any that He wills to hear;

... وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي الْقُبُورِ (٢٢)

but thou canst not make those to hear who are (buried) in graves.

إِنْ أَنتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ (٢٣)

23. Thou art no other than a warner.

C3906. The function of a Prophet is to preach Allah's Truth, to point out the right Way, to show men the need of repentance, and to warn them against the dangers which they incur by living a life of evil. He cannot compel them to accept the Truth or listen to the Message.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا...

24. Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner:

C3907. It is Allah Who sends the Revelation. While there is warning in it for the heedless, there is good news for those who listen and repent.

The warning always came to all peoples before punishment.

... وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (٢٤)

and there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past).

وَإِن يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

25. And if they reject thee, so did their predecessors,

... جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالزُّبُرِ وَبِالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ (٢٥)

to whom came their messengers with Clear Signs, Books of Dark Prophecies, and the Book of Enlightenment.

C3908. The three things here mentioned are also mentioned in 3:184, where I have explained the meaning in n. 490.

All spiritual teaching centres round

- the evidences of Allah in our lives,
- the sublime teaching of Prophets of Allah, and
- the rules and laws which guide holy living. (R).

ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

26. In the end did I punish those who rejected Faith:

... فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (٢٦)

and how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)!

C3909. Cf. 22:44 and 34:45.

The rejecters of Allah hardly realise the terrible consequences to them individually and collectively, if Allah's grace is withdrawn from them and they are left to perish in their own sins and wrong-doing.

C.193 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(35:27-45)

Man can see by his own experience

What infinite shades and grades and colour

There are in nature. So are there grades
In the spiritual world. The Good and the True
Understand Allah, Who knows and watches
Over all His creatures. The Good will reach
Eternal Bliss. while the Evil will find
No helper. Arrogance and plotting will be
The undoing of Evil; its doom
Is sure, if it fails to profit by the respite
Granted by the All-Merciful Allah.

Section 4

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً...

27. Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky?

... فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُّخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا...

With it We then bring out produce of various colors.

C3910. Everyone can see how Allah's artistry produces from rain the wonderful variety of crops and fruits-golden, green, red, yellow, and showing all the most beautiful tints we can think of. And each undergoes in nature the gradual shading off in its transformation from the raw stage to the stage of maturity.

... وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بِيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ (٢٧)

And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of color, and black intense in hue.

C3911. These wonderful colours and shades of colours are to be found not only in vegetation but in rocks and mineral products.

There are the white veins of marble and quartz or of chalk, the red laterite, the blue basaltic rocks, the ink-black flints, and all the variety, shade, and gradation of colours.

Speaking of mountains, we think of their "azure hue" from a distance, due to atmospheric effects, and these atmospheric effects lead our thoughts to the glories of clouds, sunsets, the zodiacal light, the aurora borealis, and all kinds of Nature's gorgeous pageantry,

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَٰلِكَ...

28. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colors.

C3912. In the physical shapes of human and animal life, also, we see variations in shades and gradations of colours of all kinds. But these variations and gradations, marvelous though they be, are as nothing compared with the variations and differences in the inner or spiritual world.

See next note.

... إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء...

Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge:

C3913. In outer nature we can, through colours, understand and appreciate the finest shades and gradations. But in the spiritual world that variation or gradation is even more subtle and more comprehensive.

Who can truly understand it?

Only Allah's servants, who know, i.e., who have the inner knowledge which comes through their acquaintance with the spiritual world,-it is such people who truly appreciate the inner world, and it is they who know that the fear of Allah is the beginning of wisdom.

For such fear is akin to appreciation and love,

- appreciation of all the marvelous beauties of Allah's outer and inner world ("Allah is Exalted in Might") and
- love because of His Grace and Kindness ("Oft-Forgiving"). But Allah's forgiveness extends to many who do not truly understand Him.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ (٢٨)

for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ...

29. Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer

... وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً...

and spend (in Charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly,

C3914. The man of God takes Allah's Revelation **("the Book")** to heart, ever seeks to get closer and closer to Allah **("regular Prayer")**, and in doing so, is moved more and more to practical **Charity** for his fellow-creatures.

He is not ashamed of his Charity **("openly")**, but he does not do it to be seen by men **("secretly")**: he just does what is necessary for his fellow-creatures, whether people talk about it or not.

... يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ (٢٩)

hope for a Commerce that will never fail:

C3915. Here is a metaphor from commerce.

The good man's Charity comes not merely out of superfluities, but out of "what Allah has provided" for him. He therefore recognises two things:

1. that his wealth (literal and metaphorical) is not his absolutely, but that it is given to him by Allah; and
2. that he must deny himself the use of some of it, as a merchant puts by some of his wealth to invest as capital.

Only, the godly man's commerce will never fail or fluctuate; because Allah guarantees him the return, and even adds something to the return out of His own Bounty. That is, Allah gives more than ever our merits deserve.

لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ...

30. For He will pay them their meed, nay, He will give them (even) more out of His Bounty;

... إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ ...

for He is Oft-Forgiving,

C3916. No man is perfect. Everyone has his fault. But when a man tries his best in the service of Allah, his faults are blotted out, and he is treated as if he had committed no faults: "for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, and ready to appreciate service".

... شَكُورٌ (٣٠)

Most Ready to appreciate (service).

C3917. Cf. 14:5, and n. 2877 for **shakur**.

Allah is ready to recognise, appreciate, and reward the smallest service, without regard to the defects in that service. His gracious acceptance is compared to "gratitude" among men.

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ...

31. That which We have revealed to thee of the Book is the Truth -- confirming what was (revealed) before it:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ (٣١)

for Allah is assuredly -- with respect to His servants -- well acquainted and Fully-Observant.

C3918. All Revelation is one. The Quran therefore confirms the main and uncorrupted features of previous revelations.

It must be so, because Allah is fully cognizant of the needs of every age and people; and therefore His Message, while it meets those needs, must in essence be the same. His Messengers did not meet each other as men; but their contact with Allah through inspiration unified their Message. And He cares for and watches over all men, and He knows fully what their needs are, even better than they know themselves.

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا...

32. Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen:

C3919. The force of **"then"** is that of finality.

The Quran is that last Book revealed, Or

it may be here to point the contrast between "to thee" in the last verse, i.e., the holy Prophet, in contradistinction to the People of Islam, who inherited the Book after him.

... فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ...

but there are among them some who wrong their own souls;

C3920. The custodians of the Quran after the holy Prophet were the People of Islam. They were chosen for the Book, not in any narrow sense, but in the sense that the Book was given for their age and they were charged to obey it and preserve and propagate it, so that all mankind should receive the Message. But it does not follow that they are all true and faithful to their charge, as indeed we see too painfully around us to-day.

Just as mankind was chosen collectively to be Vicegerents and yet some among mankind fell into evil,- even so, some in the house of Islam fail to follow the Light given to them, and thus **"wrong their own souls"**.

... وَمِنْهُم مُّقْتَصِدٌ...

some who follow a middle course;

But **some follow a middle course:**

in their case "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak": their intentions are good, but they have much to learn yet of the true Muslim life and Muslim virtues.

... وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

and some who are, by Allah's leave, foremost in good deeds;

Then there is a third class: they may not indeed be perfect, but both their intentions and their conduct are

sound, and they form an example to other men: they are **"foremost"** in every good deed.

They are so, not by their own merits, but by the Grace of Allah. And they have reached the highest Achievement,- the salvation, which is typified by the various metaphors that follow.

... ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ (٣٢)

that is the highest Grace.

... جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا

33. Gardens of Eternity will they enter:

C3921. "The Garden" signifies their environment:

all they see about them will give them comfort, rest, and satisfaction, and a feeling of beauty and dignity.

... يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِن ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا...

therein will they be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls;

The jewels and clothes signify their personal external state:

here, again, everything will give them a sense of beauty and dignity, comfort, rest, and satisfaction.

And finally, most important of all, comes their internal state, where again they will have the same sense of beauty, dignity, comfort, rest, and satisfaction: this is indicated by their words of Praise (verses 34-35).

C3922. bracelets of gold and pearls; Cf. 18:31 and 22:23.

... وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ (٣٣)

and their garments there will be of silk.

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ...

34. And they will say: "Praise be to Allah, Who has removed from us (all) sorrow:

... إِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٣٤)

for Our Lord is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Ready to appreciate (service):

C3923. Cf. above. 35:30.

Note how beautifully the argument is rounded off.

In verse 30 they were told that "Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate service".

Now they have reached the Goal, and they have found the Promise profoundly true. All their hopes are fulfilled, and their sorrows ended.

الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِن فَضْلِهِ...

35. "Who has, out of His bounty, settled us in a Home that will last:

... لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ (٣٥)

no toil nor sense of weariness shall touch us therein."

C3924. In case it should be thought that perpetual happiness might cloy or be dull, as would be the case in this life, it is added-as the experience of those who attain that state-that it is not so on that plane of existence. Not only is there Joy, but it remains fresh and leads to no weariness.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ...

36. But those who reject (Allah) -- for them will be the Fire of Hell:

C3925. The **"Fire"** is the opposite to the "Garden".

- Instead of there being comfort, rest, and satisfaction in their environment, there will be pain, suffering and anguish.
- Instead of there being dignity there will be humiliation. And there will be no hope of its termination or abatement, not even a hope of annihilation.

... لَا يُقْضَى عَلَيْهِمْ فَيَمُوتُوا وَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُم مِّنْ عَذَابِهَا...

no term shall be determined for them, so they should die, nor shall its Penalty be lightened for them:

... كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي كُلَّ كَفُورٍ (٣٦)

thus do We reward every ungrateful one!

وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُونَ فِيهَا...

37. Therein will they cry aloud (for assistance):

... رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا ...

"Our Lord! bring us out:

C3926. Cf. 23:107.

Not only will their surroundings be the opposite of those in Heaven: their internal state will be one of humiliation, of piteous and fruitless appeals, of vain regrets for a past that cannot be recalled, and vain sights for a future whose gates they have themselves barred.

If they were sent back, they would relapse to their sins. Cf. 6:28.

... نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ...

we shall work righteousness, not the (deeds) we used to do!"

C3927. Cf. 7:53.

Their hankering after another chance, after having deliberately rejected all chances, will have no basis of reason in it.

... أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَن تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءكُمُ النَّذِيرُ...

Did we not give you long enough life so that he that would should receive admonition?

And (moreover) the warner came to you.

... فَذُوقُوا ...

So taste ye (the fruit of your deeds):

... فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ (٣٧)

for the Wrongdoers there is no helper."

C3928. They had a long enough respite for repentance and amendment. And moreover, besides all the other sources, in nature, history, and their own hearts, by which they could learn of the Right, they had the actual teaching and warning of a messenger whose words spoke direct to them. In the circumstances the Penalty is only the fruit of their own conduct.

Section 5

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَالِمُ غَيْبِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

38. Verily Allah knows (all) the hidden things of the heavens and the earth:

C3929. Everything that exists is known to Allah: not only concrete things, but feelings, motives, plans, and acts of the will in the human breast.

... إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٣٨)

verily He has full knowledge of all that is in (men's) hearts.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

39. He it is that has made you inheritors in the earth:

C3930. inheritors: khalaif. In two senses:

1. as Vicegerents on earth, and
2. as successors to previous people who forfeited their rights by wrong-doing.

The honour and dignity of 1 and the examples of the past in 2 should have kept them straight and made them truly grateful.

See also 6:165 and n. 988.

... فَمَن كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ...

if, then, any do reject (Allah), their rejection (works) against themselves:

C3931. Their rejection and ingratitude only causes injury to themselves. They lose all honour and incur odium in the sight of Allah, and they complete their own undoing.

... وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا مَقْتًا...

their rejection but adds to the odium for the Unbelievers in the sight of their Lord:

... وَلَا يَزِيدُ الْكَافِرِينَ كُفْرُهُمْ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (٣٩)

their rejection but adds to (their own) undoing.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

40. Say:

"Have ye seen (these) 'partners' of yours whom ye call upon besides Allah?"

C3932. The people who enthrone in their hearts for worship anything besides Allah may well be asked a few questions. Some of such questions are indicated in the text with terse precision:

1. Have you seen these gods of yours?

   Do they exist?

   "Seeing" of course does not necessarily mean physical sight. We do not see the air, but no one doubts that it exists. And the air is a physical substance. There are forces that we know exist, but we do not see them. To us, who have Faith, Allah is a truer Reality than anything else that we know, including ourselves.

   Can the false worshippers say that of any of their false gods?

2. Have your gods created or originated anything on earth?

   You may worship power or wealth, but that is a scramble for things as between selfish men. Power or wealth does not create new men or new worlds.

3. Have they a share in the ordering of the heavens?

   Obviously your false gods fail there.

4. Or have these false gods a book or revelation from the Supreme God, with clear evidence, to give them authority to teach men?

   The Prophets or Messengers of Allah have such authority, and they bring evidence of the One True God.

The fact is that falsehood is falsehood, however much one form of it may support another by delusions.

... أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ...

Show me what it is they have created in the (wide) earth.

... أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ...

Or have they a share in the heavens?

... أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْهُ...

Or have We given them a Book from which they (can derive) clear (evidence)? --

... بَلْ إِن يَعِدُ الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا (٤٠)

Nay, the wrongdoers promise each other nothing but delusions.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَن تَزُولَا...

41. It is Allah Who sustains the heavens and the earth, lest they cease (to function):

C3933. The universe, as we know it, shows not only evidence of initial designs, but also the working of the Creator who constantly sustains it.

That is Allah.

If you could imagine that removed, what is there to keep it going? There would only be chaos.

... وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ...

and if they should fail, there is none -- not one -- can sustain them thereafter:

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا (٤١)

verily He is Most Forbearing, Oft-Forgiving.

C3934. Allah's world goes on according to the laws and decrees established by Him. There are occasional lapses and deviations on the part of His creatures. But He does not punish every petty fault.

One of His merciful qualities is that of repeated forbearance and forgiveness.

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ...

42. They swore their strongest oaths by Allah

... لَئِن جَاءهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَى مِنْ إِحْدَى الْأُمَمِ... ...

that if a warner came to them, they would follow his guidance better than any (other) of the Peoples:

C3935. Cf. 6:157.

In the first instance this referred to the Quraish.

Their attitude to the People of the Book had been one of lofty superiority or of insincere excuses. They twitted the Jews and Christians with deviating from their own lights and their own revelations; and for themselves, they said they had received no direct revelation from Allah, or they would have shown themselves the most amenable to discipline, the most ready to follow Allah's Law. This was before the holy Prophet received his mission from Allah.

When he received it and announced it, they turned away from it, They fled from it and put a greater and greater distance between it and themselves.

But this is the way of all sinners. They find much to carp at in others, and much to excuse in themselves. But when all grounds for excuse are removed, they will be found, not nearer, but farther and farther away from truth and righteousness.

... فَلَمَّا جَاءهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا (٤٢)

but when a warner came to them, it has only increased their flight (from righteousness) --

اسْتِكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ...

43. On account of their arrogance in the land and their plotting of Evil.

C3936. Two causes are mentioned why the Truth is refused acceptance.

1. Unregenerate man is arrogant, and Truth and Righteousness expose all his pretences.

2. He hopes, by underhand plots, to undermine Truth and destroy it; but he is caught in his own snares, while Truth marches forward triumphant.

... وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ...

But the plotting of Evil will hem in only the authors thereof.

... فَهَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ...

Now are they but looking for the way the ancients were dealt with?

C3937. In all history, men who followed evil were dealt with in three stages by Allah:

1. He was forbearing and merciful, and gave them respite;
2. He sent them admonition through Ms Messengers, or His Signs, or His revelation;
3. He dealt out justice and punishment.

At any given moment, those given to iniquity may well be asked: "Are you going to wait through all these stages or are you going at once to repent, obtain forgiveness, and walk in the ways of righteousness?"

... فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا...

But no change wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing):

C3938. Allah's Laws are fixed, and His ways of dealing with those who follow iniquity are the same in all ages.

Our human will may falter or turn away from its course, but Allah's Will ever follows its course and cannot be turned away by any cause whatever.

... وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا (٤٣)

no turning off wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing).

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

44. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them --

C3939. Cf. 30:9.

If no other argument will convince men who follow evil, let them travel through space or time, and learn from the experience of others. Evil always came to an evil end. Let not any one individual or generation think that it could escape by some special trick or power. Far wiser and more powerful men were personally brought to account for their iniquities.

... وَكَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً...

though they were superior to them in strength?

... وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعْجِزَهُ مِن شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

Nor is Allah to be frustrated by anything whatever in the heavens or on earth:

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا (٤٤)

for He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

... وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا

45. If Allah were to punish men according to what they deserve,

C3940. Cf. 16:61.

There would be no salvation for any of us if we went merely on our deserts. It is Allah's mercy that saves us and helps us to a better and better life until we attain the goal of our existence.

... مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهَا مِن دَابَّةٍ...

He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature:

C3941. A single living creature. This may refer to man, the living crawling creature, with so many possibilities and yet so many weaknesses.

But it may mean all creatures literally, as the life of this planet more or less centres round the life of man. He has been given dominion on this earth, and in his state of purity he is Allah's vicegerent.

... وَلَكِن يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

but He gives them respite for a stated Term:

... فَإِذَا جَاء أَجَلُهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ بَصِيرًا (٤٥)

when their Term expires, verily Allah has in His sight all His servants.

C3942. Has in His sight all creatures: i.e., to deal with, according to His laws of Forbearance, Mercy and Justice:

see n. 3937 above.

The respite does not mean that any one escapes Hiis vigilant eye. All will be dealt with according to their deeds, with justice tempered with Mercy.



فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

So Glorified is He and Exalted above all that they associate with Him, and in Whose Hands is the dominion of all things, and to Him you shall be returned.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Yasin

يس

Introduction and Summary

See Introduction to Surah 34. This particular Surah is devoted to the Holy Prophet and the Revelation which he brought. The Abbreviated Letters *Ya Sin* are usually construed as a title of the Holy Prophet. But it is not permissible to be dogmatic about the meaning of Abbreviated Letters. See Appendix I after Surah 2.

This Surah is considered to be "the heart of the Quran", as it concerns the central figure in the teaching of Islam and the central doctrine of Revelation and Hereafter. As referring to the

Hereafter, it is appropriately read in solemn ceremonies after death.

In chronology it belongs to the middle or early Makkan period.

In Surah 37:130 (a cognate Surah) occurs the word Ilyasin; see n. 4115a.

Summary- The Quran is full of wisdom, and those are unfortunate who cannot profit by it: Parable of the City that defied-all but one-the Messengers of Grace and Mercy (36:1-32, C. 194).

Various Signs of Allah in nature and Revelation (36:33-50, and C. 195).

The Resurrection and the Hereafter (36:51-83, and C. 196).

C.194 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(37:1-32)

The wisdom of Revelation-the Quran received
Through the Holy Prophet-is a guide
To the Straight Path, and a warning against
The terrible state in which the yokes
Of Sin enslave us. The righteous receive it
With joy, for they believe in the Hereafter.
Behold, there was once a City, to which
Came two righteous men with the Gospel of Truth,
But they were rejected and persecuted; they were joined
By a third. But the City refused to believe
Or to turn from inequity. Only one man was found
In its outskirts, to bear witness to Truth,
Faith, and Righteousness, and he did suffer
Martyrdom. He attained Peace, but mourned
For his people, in that they shut the gates

Of Salvation and Allah's Mercy on themselves.
Alas for man's short-sighted folly in defying
The Grace that would shield and deliver him!

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يس (١)

1. Ya Sin.

C3943. Some Commentators take **Ya** to be the vocative particle, and **Sin** to be the abbreviation of **Insan**, **Sin** being the only "Firm Letter" in the word. In that case it would be an address to man. "O man!"

But "man" in this connection is understood to mean the Leader of man, the noblest of mankind. Muhammad the Prophet of Allah. For this Surah deals mainly with the holy Prophet and his Message. But no dogmatic assertion can be made about the Abbreviated Letters, for which see Appendix 1, following Surah 2.

Ya-Sin is usually treated as a title of the holy Prophet.

وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢)

2. By the Qur'án, full of Wisdom --

C3944. The best credentials of the holy Prophet are:

- the revelation which he brought ("the Quran"), and
- the heroic unselfish life which he led ("on a Straight Way").

The appeal is therefore made on the testimony of these two facts.

إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٣)

3. Thou art indeed one of the messengers.

عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٤)

4. On a Straight Way.

تَنزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ (٥)

5. It is a Revelation sent down by (Him) the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C3945. The **Revelation** again is characterized by two attributes which we find most helpful in contemplating about Allah.

- It has force and power:

  for Allah is Exalted in Might and able to enforce His Will.

- And it brings a Message of hope and mercy;

  for Allah is Most Merciful.

By its characteristics we know that the Quran is from Allah. (R).

لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ (٦)

6. In order that thou mayest admonish a people, whose fathers had **received** no admonition, and who therefore remain heedless (of the Signs of Allah).

C3946. The Quraish had received no Prophet before, and therefore one of themselves was made the vehicle for the universal Message to the whole world.

لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٧)

7. The Word is proved true against the greater part of them; for they do not believe.

C3947. Cf. 7:30, and n. 1012; also 17:16, and n. 2193.

If people deliberately and obstinately refuse **"to believe"**, i.e., to receive guidance and admonition, the result must be that Allah's grace and mercy are withdrawn from them. Their own perversity inevitably blocks up all channels for their correction.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا...

8. We have put yokes round their necks right up to their chins,

C3948. Man's misdeeds inevitably call forth the operation of Allah's Law. The result of man's willful disobedience is now described in a series of metaphors.

1. Refusal of Allah's Light means less and less freedom of action for man: the **yoke** of sin is fastened round man's neck, and it gets more and more tightened, right up to the chin.

2. The head is forced up and kept in a stiff position, so that the mind becomes befogged. Moral obliquity taints the intellect.

   According to the Sanskrit proverb,

   > "When destruction comes near, understanding is turned upside down."

   According to the Latin proverb,

   > "Whom God wishes to destroy, He first makes demented."

   In other words, iniquity not only is folly, but leads deeper and deeper into folly, narrowness of vision, and blindness to the finer things of life.

3. Ibis state of deprivation of Grace leads to such a decline in spiritual vitality that the victim can neither progress nor turn back, as explained in the next verse.

... فَهِيَ إِلَى الأَذْقَانِ فَهُم مُّقْمَحُونَ (٨)

so that their heads are forced up (and they cannot see).

...وَجَعَلْنَا مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا

9. And We have put a bar in front of them and a bar behind them,

C3949. Their retreat is cut off and their progress is impossible. Further the Light that should come from above is cut off, so that they become totally devoid of any hope, and the last gleam of any spiritual understanding is extinguished in them.

... فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لاَ يُبْصِرُونَ (٩)

and further, We have covered them up; so that they cannot see.

وَسَوَاء عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠)

10. The same is it to **them** whether thou admonish them or thou do not admonish them: they will not believe.

C3950. When the stage just described is reached, revelation or spiritual teaching ceases to have any value for them.

Why then preach?

The answer is given in the verses following.

إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ ...

11. Thou canst but admonish: such a one as follows the Message and fears the (Lord) Most Gracious,

C3951. Cf. 35:18.

As far as those are concerned, who have obstinately delivered themselves to evil, the preaching of Allah's Message has no appeal, because their own will shuts them out.

But there are others who are anxious to hear Allah's Message and receive Allah's grace. They love Allah and fear to offend against His holy Law, and their fear is not merely superficial but deep-seated: for while they do not yet see Allah, nor do other people see them, they have the same sense of Allah's presence as if they saw Him, and their religion is not a mere pose, "to be seen of men".

... بِالْغَيْبِ ...

unseen:

C3952. See n. 3902 to 35:18.

Unseen is here adverbial: their reverence for Allah is unaffected by the fact that they do not see Him, or that other people do not observe them, because their attitude arises out of a genuine love for Allah.

... فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ (١١)

give such a one, therefore, good tidings, of Forgiveness and a Reward most generous.

C3953. To such persons the Message of Allah comes as a gospel or good news: because it shows them the way of forgiveness for anything wrong in their past, and it gives them the promise of a full reward in the future,- generous beyond any deserts of their own, but arising out of Allah's unbounded Bounty.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى ...

12. Verily We shall give life to the dead,

C3954. All this is possible, because there is the assurance of a Hereafter, in which Allah will be all-in-all, and evil will no longer bestride the world, as the term of its respite wit] have expired.

... وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ...

and We record that which they sent before and that which they leave behind,

C3955. Our deeds, good and bad, go to Allah before us. They will of course be brought to our account; but our account will also be swelled by the example we left behind us and the consequences of our deeds, that will come into play or continue to operate after our earthly life has ceased.

Our moral and spiritual responsibility is therefore much wider than as affects our own person.

... وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ (١٢)

and of all things have We taken account in a clear Book (of evidence).

C3956. Cf. 2:124 and n. 124.

All our account will be exactly preserved as in a book of record.

Section 2

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلاً أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ ...

13. Set forth to them, by way of a parable, the (story of) the Companions of the City.

C3957. Many of the classical Commentators have supposed that the City referred to was Antioch.

Now Antioch was one of the most important cities in North Syria in the first century of the Christian era. It was a Greek city founded by Seleucus Nicator, one of the successors of Alexander, about 300 B.C. in memory of his father Antiochus. It was close to the sea, and had its sea-port at Seleucia. Soon after Christ his disciples successfully preached there, and they "were called Christians first in Antioch": Acts, 11:26.

It afterwards became the seat of a most important Bishopric of the Christian Church.

In the story told here **"by way of a parable"**, the City rejected the Message, and the City was destroyed: 36:29.

Following Ibn Kathir, I reject the identification with Antioch decisively. No name, or period, or place is mentioned in the text.

The significance of the story is in the lessons to be derived from it as a parable, for which see the next note. That is independent of name, time, or place.

... إِذْ جَاءهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (١٣)

Behold, there came messengers to it.

...إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا

14. When We (first) sent to them two messengers, they rejected them:

... فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ ...

but We strengthened them with a third:

C3958. Allah sends His messengers or teachers of Truth by ones and twos, and where the opposition is great and He considers it necessary, he supports them with others.

Their mission is divine, but they do not claim to be more than men. This is used by the unjust and the ungodly as if it were a reproach, whereas it should commend them

to men, for mankind is glorified by such commission and by Allah's Self-revelation.

The Message is clearly expressed in human language, but because it exposes all evil, men think it unlucky, as it checks their selfishness. It is often the poorest and most despised of mankind, from the outskirts or "farthest parts of the City", that accept the Message and are willing to work and die for it. The stiff-necked resist and accomplish their own destruction.

... فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ (١٤)

they said, "Truly, we have been sent on a mission to you."

... قَالُوا مَا أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا

15. The (people) said:

"Ye are only men like ourselves;

C3959. Cf. Acts, 14:15, where Paul and Barnabas say, in the city of Lystra near the modern Konia, "We also are men with like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities..."

... وَمَا أَنزَلَ الرَّحْمَن مِن شَيْءٍ...

and (Allah) Most Gracious sends no sort of revelation:

C3960. They not only reject the mission of the particular messengers, but they deny the possibility of Allah's sending such mission.

Note how they convict themselves of inconsistency by using Allah's name **"Most Gracious"**, even though they may mean it ironically!

... إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلاَّ تَكْذِبُونَ (١٥)

Ye do nothing but lie."

قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ (١٦)

16. They said:

"Our Lord doth know that we have been sent on a mission to you:

C3961. Just as a Messenger whose credentials are doubted can refer to the authority granted by his Principal, as the highest proof of his mission, so these messengers of Allah invoke the authority of Allah in proof of their mission.

In effect they say: "The knowledge of Allah is perfect, and He knows that our mission is from Him; if you do not, it is your own misfortune." (R).

وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلاَّ الْبَلاَغُ الْمُبِينُ (١٧)

17. "And Our duty is only to proclaim the clear Message."

C3962. Then they proceed to explain what their mission is.

It is not to force them but to convince them. It is to proclaim openly and clearly Allah's Law, which they were breaking,-to denounce their sins and to show them the better path. If they were obstinate, it was their own loss. If they were rebellious against Allah, the punishment rested with Allah.

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ...

18. The (people) said:

"For us, We augur an evil omen from you:

C3963. Tair means a bird.

Like the Roman augurs, the Arabs had a superstition about deriving omens from birds.

Cf. the English word "auspicious", from the Latin avis, a bird, and specio, I see.

From **Tair** (bird) came ta-taiyara, or ittaiyara, to draw evil omens. Because the prophets of Allah denounced evil, the evil-doers thought that they brought ill-luck to them.

As a matter of fact any evil that happened to them was the result of their own Hi-deeds.

Cf. 7:131, where the Egyptians ascribed their calamities to the ill-luck brought by Moses:

and 27:47, where the Thamud ascribed ill-luck to the preaching of Salih.

... لَئِن لَّمْ تَنتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٨)

if ye desist not, we will certainly stone you, and a grievous punishment indeed will be inflicted on you by us."

... قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ

19. They said:

"Your evil omens are with yourselves:

C3964. 'What ye call omens arise from your own ill-deeds. Do you suppose that a man who comes to warn you and teach you the better way brings you ill-luck?

Fie upon you!'

... أَئِن ذُكِّرْتُم...

(deem ye this an evil omen), if ye are admonished?

... بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ (١٩)

Nay, but ye are a people transgressing all bounds!"

C3965. To call Good evil and accuse of falsehood men of truth who come unselfishly to bring the message of the beneficent Mercy of Allah, is the very height of extravagance and transgression.

وَجَاء مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى...

20. Then there came running, from the farthest part of the City, a man,

C3966. While the wealthy, influential, and fashionable men in the city were doubtful of Allah's providence and superstitiously believed in Chance and evil omens, the Truth was seen by a man in the outskirts of the City, a man held in low esteem by the arrogant. He had believed, and he wanted his City to believe.

So, in Arabia, when the arrogant chiefs of the Quraish exiled the holy Prophet, it was men from Madinah and from the outskirts, who welcomed him, believed in him, and supported his mission in every way.

... قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٢٠)

saying,

"O my people! obey the messengers:

اتَّبِعُوا مَن لاَّ يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٢١)

21. "Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves), and who have themselves received Guidance.

C3967. Prophets do not seek their own advantage. They serve Allah and humanity. 'Their hope lies in the good pleasure of Allah, to Whose service they are devoted.

Cf. 10:72; 12:104; etc.

وَمَا لِيَ لاَ أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي ...

22. "It would not be reasonable in me if I did not serve Him Who created me,

C3968. The argument throughout is that of intense personal conviction for the individual himself, coupled with an appeal to his people to follow that conviction and get the benefit of the spiritual satisfaction which he has himself achieved. He says in effect:

'how is it possible for me to do otherwise than to serve and adore my Maker?

I shall return to Him, and so will you, and all this applies to you as much as to me.'

Note how effective is the transition from the personal experience to the collective appeal.

... وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٢)

and to Whom ye shall (all) be brought back.

أَأَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِهِ آلِهَةً...

23. "Shall I take (other) gods besides Him?

... إِن يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَنُ بِضُرٍّ ...

If (Allah) Most Gracious should intend some adversity for me,

C3969. The next plea is that for exclusive service to Allah.

'Suppose it were proper to worship other gods-Mammon, Self, or imaginary deities set up as idols,-yet of what benefit would that be?

All power is in Allah. In His universal Plan, He may think fit to give me some sorrow or punishment: would these subordinate deities be able to help me or intercede for me with Him?

Not at all. What use would they be?

In fact I should obviously be going astray,-wandering from the true Path.'

... لاَ تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يُنقِذُونِ (٢٣)

of no use whatever will be their intercession for me, nor can they deliver me.

إِنِّي إِذًا لَّفِي ضَلاَلٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٤)

24. "I would indeed, if I were to do so, be in manifest Error.

... إِنِّي آمَنتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ

25. "For me, I have faith in the Lord of you (all):

C3970. Again a transition from the assured personal conviction to the appeal to all to profit by the speaker's experience.

'I have found the fullest satisfaction for my soul in Allah. He is my God, but He is your God also. My experience can be yours also.

Will you not follow my advice, and prove for yourselves that the Lord is indeed good?'

... فَاسْمَعُونِ (٢٥)

listen, then, to me!"

...قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ

26. It was said: "Enter thou the Garden."

C3971. This godly and righteous man entered into the Garden.

Perhaps it is implied that he suffered martyrdom. But even then his thoughts were always with his People. He regretted their obstinacy and want of understanding, and wished even then that they might repent and obtain salvation, but they were obdurate and suffered for their sins as we learn from verses 28-29 below.

... قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦)

He said:

"Ah me! would that my People knew (what I know)! --

بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ (٢٧)

27. "For that my **Lord** has granted me Forgiveness and has enrolled me among those held in honor!"

C3972. This man was just a simple honest soul, but he heard and obeyed the call of the prophets and obtained his spiritual desire for himself and did best to obtain salvation for his people.

For he loved his people and respected his ancestral traditions as far as they were good, but had no hesitation in accepting the new Light when it came to him. All his past was forgiven him and he was raised to dignity and honour in the Kingdom of Heaven.

وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِن بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُندٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ...

28. And We sent not down against his People, after Him, any hosts from heaven,

... وَمَا كُنَّا مُنزِلِينَ (٢٨)

nor was it needful for Us so to do.

... إِن كَانَتْ إِلاَّ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً

29. It was no more than a single mighty Blast, and behold!

C3973. Allah's Justice or Punishment does not necessarily come with pomp and circumstance, nor have the forces of human evil or wickedness the power to require the exertion of mighty spiritual forces to subdue them. **A single mighty Blast**-either the rumbling of an earthquake, or a great and violent wind-was sufficient in this case.

Cf. 11:67 and n. 1561 (which describes the fate of the Thamud; also. n. 3463 to 29:40).

... فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ (٢٩)

they were (like ashes) quenched and silent.

C3974. Cf. 21:15.

They had made a great deal of noise in their time, but they were reduced to silence, like spent ashes.

يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ...

30. Ah! alas for (My) servants!

... مَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلاَّ كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُون (٣٠)

There comes not an messenger to them but they mock Him!

C3975. Cf. 6:10 and many other passages of similar import.

Ignorant men mock at Allah's prophets, or any one who takes Religion seriously. But they do not reflect that such levity reacts on themselves. Their own lives are ruined and they cease to count.

If they study history, they will see that countless generations were destroyed before them because they did not take Truth seriously and undermined the very basis of their individual and collective existence.

My servants is here equivalent to "men". Allah regrets the folly of men, especially as He cherishes them as His own servants.

... أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّنْ الْقُرُونِ

31. See they not how many generations before them We destroyed?

... أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لاَ يَرْجِعُونَ (٣١)

Not to them will they return:

C3976. Not to them will they return.

What do the two pronouns them and they refer to?

Commentators and translators have construed them differently, and some of them evade the question. To my mind the best construction seems to be:

- the generations which we have destroyed before the people addressed ('do they not see?') will not be restored to the people addressed:
- generations (*qurn*) standing for the periods of prosperity and good fortune enjoyed by the ancestors. They have all been wiped out:
- they will never be restored, but all people will be brought before the Judgment-seat for giving an account of their deeds.

وَإِن كُلٌّ لَّمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ (٣٢)

32. But each one of them all -- will be brought before Us (for judgment).

C.195 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(37:33-50)

Are there not Signs enough around you
To bear witness to Allah, and His saving Grace?
The earth dies and revives; there are mysteries
Of Life and Sex, of Light and the Stars
And Planets in heaven, that follow
Their orbits by Law and in harmony!
There are ships and the modes of transport
By which man can conquer the forces
Around him with God-given Gifts!

Learn the Law of Goodness from them
And believe in the Hereafter; it will come
When least expected. Be prepared for Allah!

Section 3

وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ...

33. A Sign for them is the earth that is dead;

C3977. Lest any one should say, 'if they are destroyed, how can they be brought before the Judgment-seat' a symbol is pointed to.

The earth is to all intents and purposes dead in the winter, but Allah revives it in the spring.

Cf. 2:164, 30:19, and many other passages to that effect.

... أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَأْكُلُونَ (٣٣)

We do give it life, and produce grain therefrom, of which ye do eat.

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا جَنَّاتٍ مِن نَّخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ...

34. And We produce therein orchards with date-palms and Vines,

C3978. Date-palms and vines stand as symbols for fruit-trees of all kinds, these being the characteristic fruits of Arabia. Grain was mentioned in the last verse; fruit is mentioned now.

All that is necessary for food and the satisfaction of the choicest palate is produced from what looks like inert soil, fertilised by rain and springs.

Here is wonderful evidence of the artistry and providence of Allah.

... وَفَجَّرْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ الْعُيُونِ (٣٤)

and We cause springs to gush forth therein.

لِيَأْكُلُوا مِن ثَمَرِهِ ...

35. That they may enjoy the fruits of this (artistry):

C3979. Literally, eat (**akala**). Cf. 7:19, n. 1004 and 5:66, n. 776.

The same wide meaning of profit, satisfaction, and enjoyment may be attached to the word "eat" in verse 33 above.

... وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ...

it was not their hands that made this:

C3980. Man may till the soil and sow the seed, but the productive forces of nature were not made by man's hands. They are the handiwork and artistry of Allah, and are evidence of Allah's providence for His creatures.

See n. 3978 above.

... أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٣٥)

will they not then give thanks?

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا...

36. Glory to Allah, Who created in pairs all things,

C3981. The mystery of sex runs through all creation,-in man, in animal life, in vegetable life, and possibly in other things of which we have no knowledge.

Then there are pairs of opposite forces in nature, e.g., positive and negative electricity, etc. The atom itself consists of a positively charged nucleus or proton, surrounded by negatively charged electrons.

The constitution of matter itself is thus referred to pairs of opposite energies.

... مِمَّا تُنبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٦)

that the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge.

وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمُ اللَّيْلُ...

37. And a Sign for them is the Night:

... نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُم مُّظْلِمُونَ (٣٧)

We withdraw therefrom the Day, and behold they are plunged in darkness;

C3982. "Withdrawing the Day from the Night" is a striking phrase and very apt.

The Day or the Light is the positive thing. The Night or Darkness is merely negative. We cannot withdraw the negative. But if we withdraw the real thing, the positive, which filled the void, nothing is left but the void.

The whole of this section deals with Signs or Symbols,- things in the physical world around us, from which we can learn the deepest spiritual truths if we earnestly apply ourselves to them.

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ...

38. And the Sun runs his course for a period determined for him:

C3983. Mustaqarr may mean:

- a limit of time, a period determined, as in 6:67, or
- a place of rest or quiescence; or
- a dwelling place, as in 2:36.

I think the first meaning is best applicable here; but some Commentators take the second meaning.

In that case the simile would be that of the sun running a race while he is visible to us, and taking a rest during the night to prepare himself to renew his race the following day. His stay with the antipodes appears to us as his period of rest.

... لَّهَا ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٣٨)

that is the decree of (Him), the exalted in Might, the All-Knowing.

وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ ...

39. And the Moon -- We have measured for her mansions (to traverse)

C3984. The lunar stations are the 28 divisions of the Zodiac, which are supposed to mark the daily course of the moon in the heavens from the time of the new moon to the time when the moon fades away in her "inter-lunar swoon", an expressive phrase coined by the poet Shelley.

... حَتَّى عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ (٣٩)

till she returns like the old (and withered) lower part of date-stalk.

C3985. 'Urjan: a raceme of dates or of a date-palm; or the base or lower part of the raceme. When it becomes old, it becomes yellow, dry, and withered, and curves up like a sickle. Hence the comparison with the sickle-like appearance of the new moon.

The moon runs through all her phases, increasing and decreasing, until she disappears, and then reappears as a little thin curve.

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنبَغِي لَهَا أَن تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ...

40. It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day:

C3986. Though the sun and the moon both traverse the belt of the Zodiac, and their motions are different, they never catch up each other. When the sun and the moon are on the same side and on a line with the earth there is a solar eclipse, and when on opposite side in a line, there is a lunar eclipse, but there is no clash. Their Laws are fixed by Allah, and form the subject of study in astronomy.

Similarly Night and Day follow each other, but being opposites cannot coincide, a fit emblem of the opposition of Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood: see also n. 3982 above.

... وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (٤٠)

each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to Law).

C3987. Cf. 21:33, and n. 2695.

How beautifully the rounded courses of the planets and heavenly bodies are described, **"swimming"** through space, with perfectly smooth motion!

As Shakespeare expresses it,

> each "in his motion like an angel sings, Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims!"

وَآيَةٌ لَّهُمْ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (٤١)

41. And a Sign for them is that We bore their race (through the flood) in the loaded Ark;

C3988. Besides the beauty of the Night, with the stars and the planets "swimming" in their rounded courses according to perfect Law, suggesting both symmetry and harmony, there are other Signs touching closely the life of man himself, projected through Time, in the past history of his race and in his own personal experience.

The past history of his race takes us to the story of the Flood, which is symbolical of Allah's justice and mercy. Noah's Ark was a "Sign to all People": 29:15.

Man's own personal experience is appealed to in every ship afloat:

see next note.

وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُم مِّن مِّثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ (٤٢)

42. And We have created for them similar (vessels) on which they ride.

C3989. The stately ships sailing through the seas, heavier than air, yet carrying man and his goods safely and smoothly across the waters, are another Sign for man.

Ships are not mentioned, but (vessels) like the Ark: they would cover all kinds of sea-craft, but also the modem aircraft, which "swims" through air instead of through water.

وَإِن نَّشَأْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيخَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنقَذُونَ (٤٣)

43. If it were Our Will, We could drown them; then would there be no helper (to hear their cry), nor could they be delivered.

C3990. Were it not that Allah gives man the intelligence and ingenuity to construct and manage sea-craft and air-craft, the natural laws of gravity would lead to the destruction of any who attempted to pass through sea or air. It is the gift (mercy) of Allah that saves him.

إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (٤٤)

44. Except by way of Mercy from Us, and by way of (worldly) convenience (to serve them) for a time.

C3991. Cf. 16:80.

Allah has given man all these wonderful things in nature and utilities produced by the skill and intelligence which Allah has given to man.

Had it not been for these gifts, man's life would have been precarious on sea or land or in the air.

It is only Allah's Mercy that saves man from destruction for man's own follies, and that saving or the enjoyment of these utilities and conveniences he should not consider as eternal: they are only given for a time, in this life of probation.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٤٥)

45. When they are told,

"Fear ye that which is before you and that which will be after you, in order that ye may receive Mercy," (they turn back).

C3992. Man should consider and beware of the consequences of his past, and guard against the consequences in his future.

The present is only a fleeting moment poised between the past and the future, and gone even while it is being mentioned or thought about.

Man should review his whole life and prepare for the Hereafter. If he does so, Allah is Merciful: He will forgive, and give strength for a better and higher life in the

future. But this kind of teaching does not suit those steeped in this ephemeral life, They are bored, and turn away from it, to their own loss.

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِم مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ (٤٦)

46. Not a Sign comes to them from among the Signs of their Lord, but they turn away therefrom.

C3993. The Signs of Allah are many, in His great world,-in nature, in the heart of man, and in the Revelation sent through His messengers. They turn away from all of them, as a man who has ruined his eyesight turns away from the light.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ...

47. And when they are told, "Spend ye of (the bounties) with which Allah has provided you."

C3994. To selfish men, the good may make an appeal, and say: "Look! Allah has given you wealth, or influence, or knowledge, or talent. Why not spend some of it in charity, i.e., for the good of your fellow-creatures?" But the selfish only think of themselves and laugh such teaching to scorn.

... قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنُطْعِمُ مَن لَّوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ أَطْعَمَهُ...

You Unbelievers say to those who believe:

"Shall we then feed those whom, if Allah had so willed, He would have fed, (Himself)?

C3995. They are too full of themselves to have a corner in their hearts for others. "If" they say, "Allah gave them nothing, why should we?"

There is arrogance in this as well as blasphemy: arrogance in thinking that they are favoured because of their merits, and blasphemy in laying the blame of other people's misfortunes on Allah.

They further try to turn the tables on the Believers by pretending that the Believers are entirely on a wrong track. They forget that all men are on probation and trial: they hold their gifts on trust: those apparently less favoured, in that they have fewer of this world's goods,

may be really more fortunate, because they are teaming patience, self-reliance, and the true value of things ephemeral which is apt to be very much exaggerated in men's eyes.

... إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٤٧)

Ye are in nothing but manifest error."

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٨)

48. Further, they say, "When will this promise (come to pass), if what ye say is true?"

C3996. In addition to the arrogance and blasphemy referred to in the last note, they not only realise Faith, but they taunt the men of Faith as if the men of Faith were dealing in falsehood: "If there is a Hereafter, tell us when it will be!"

The answer is:

"It will come sooner than you expect: you will yet be disputing about things of Faith and neglecting your opportunities in Life, when the Hour will sound, and you will have no time even to make your dispositions in this life: you will be cut off from everyone whom you thought to be near and dear to you, or able to help you!"

مَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً تَأْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُونَ (٤٩)

49. They will not (have to) wait for aught but a single Blast:

it will seize them while they are yet disputing among themselves!

فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ تَوْصِيَةً وَلَا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٥٠)

50. No (chance) will they then have, by will, to dispose (of their affairs), nor to return to their own people!

C.196 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(37:51-83)

When the Day comes, men will be taken
Aback. The Judgement Seat will be established.
Blessed will be those who attain Salvation;
Their Joy, Satisfaction, and Peace will be crowned
With nearness to their Lord!
Alas for the Sinful, who deliberately
Followed Evil: their own nature
And actions will speak against them:
They will face the realities of Punishment!
Both Revelation and Nature are eloquent
In instructing man for his own good
In the Hereafter, which will come
As a certainty. Praise and Glory to Allah!

Section 4

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ ...

51. The trumpet shall be sounded,

C3997. Traditionally, the angel who will sound the Trumpet is Israfil, but the name does not occur in the Quran.

The Trumpet is mentioned in many places: e.g., 6:73; 78:18, etc.

... فَإِذَا هُم مِّنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَنسِلُونَ (٥١)

when behold! from the sepulchers (men) will rush forth to their Lord!

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَن بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْقَدِنَا...

52. They will say: "Ah! woe unto us! Who hath raised us up from our beds of repose?...

C3998. The dead will rise as in a stupor, and they will be confused in the new conditions! They will gradually regain their memory and their personality. They will be reminded that Allah in His grace and mercy had already announced the Hereafter in their probationary lives, and the word of Allah's messengers, which then seemed so strange and remote, was true and was now being fulfilled.

... هَٰذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ...

(A voice will say:)

"This is what (Allah) Most Gracious had promised,

... وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٥٢)

and true was the word of the messengers!"

... إِن كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً

53. It will be no more than a single Blast,

C3999. Time and Space, as we know them here, will be no more. The whole gathering will be as in the twinkling of an eye.

Cf. 36:49 above.

... فَإِذَا هُمْ جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ (٥٣)

when lo! they will all be brought up before Us!

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا...

54. Then, on that Day, not a soul will be wronged in the least,

C4000. The Judgment will be on the highest standard of Justice and Grace. Not the least merit will go unrewarded, though the reward will be for the righteous far more than their deserts. No penalty will be exacted but that which the doer himself by his past deeds brought on himself.

Cf. 28:84.

... وَلَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٥٤)

and ye shall but be repaid the meeds of your past Deeds.

إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغُلٍ فَاكِهُونَ (٥٥)

55. Verily the Companions of the Garden shall that Day have joy in all that they do;

C4001. We now have the symbolism for the undesirable Bliss of the Hereafter, in four verses 55-58. Notice the subtle gradation in the description.

First, in this verse, we have the nature of the *mise en scene* and the nature of the joy therein.

- It will be a Garden i.e., everything agreeable to see and hear and feel and taste and smell;
- delightfully green lawns and meadows, trees and shrubs;
- the murmur of streams and the songs of birds:
- the delicate texture of flowers and leaves and the shapes of beauty in clouds and mist;
- the flavours of fruits;
- and the perfumes of flowers and scents. The joy in the Garden will be an active joy, without fatigue:

whatever we do in it, every employment in which we engage there, will be a source of joy without alloy.

هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلَالٍ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ مُتَّكِؤُونَ (٥٦)

56. They and their associates will be in groves of (cool) shade, reclining on thrones (of dignity);

C4002. Secondly, the joy or happiness is figured to be, not solitary, but shared by **associates** like those whom we imagine in spiritual Love or Marriage; in whose fair faces "some ray divine reflected shines" (Jami): whose society is enjoyed in homes of happiness, situated in soothing shade, and furnished with thrones of dignity and peace.

لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ ...

57. (Every) fruit (enjoyment) will be there for them;

C4003. Thirdly, besides any external conditions of Bliss, the Bliss in the Hereafter has an inner quality, expressed by the word **fakihatun**.

The root fakihah means 'to rejoice greatly', to be full of merriment.

The ordinary meaning of 'fruit' attached to fakihah is derived from the idea that the flavour of choice, ripe fruit, delights the heart of man. Just as akala (to eat) is used for 'enjoyment', (5:66, n. 776 and 13:35, n. 1854), so fakihah, 'fruit', stands here for the specially choice enjoyment, which goes with a fastidious and well-cultivated taste.

In other words, it suggests that highest kind of joy which depends upon the inner faculty rather than any outward circumstances.

This is further emphasised by the second clause:

"they shall have whatever they call for".

Again using the language of this life, the musician's heaven will be full of music; the mathematician's will be full of mathematical symmetry and perfection; the artist's will be full of beauty of form, and so on.

... وَلَهُم مَّا يَدَّعُونَ (٥٧)

they shall have whatever they call for;

سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِن رَّبٍّ رَّحِيمٍ (٥٨)

58. "Peace! --

a Word (of salutation) from a Lord Most Merciful!

C4004. Fourthly, we reach the highest grade of bliss, the salutation **"Peace!"** from Allah Most Merciful. Cf. 10:10.

That Word sums up the attainment of the final Goal. For it explains the nature of the Most High-,-He is not only a Lord and Cherisher, but a Lord Whose supreme glory is Mercy, Peace, and Harmony!.

وَامْتَازُوا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٥٩)

59. And O ye in sin! get ye apart this Day!

C4005. Notice how this finely balanced passage, after reaching the summit of sublimity in describing the state of the Blessed, in the word Salam, gradually takes us down to contemplate the state of the Sinners in a graduated descent.

In the first place, it refers to their negative state, their state of isolation. From this Day of Judgment, they will no longer have the chance of being with the Blessed and perhaps of profiting spiritually by that proximity.

The first feature of the Day of Judgment is that it is a Day of Separation-of sorting out. Each soul now finds its own true level, as the period of probation is over.

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ...

60. "Did I not enjoin on you, O ye children of Adam, that ye should not worship Satan;

C4006. Secondly, there is a gentle reproach to the wrong-doers, more in sorrow than in anger. They are addressed as **"children of Adam",** to emphasize two facts,

1. that they have disgraced their ancestry, for Adam after his Fall repented and was forgiven, and the high Destiny of mankind has been the prize open to all his descendants, and
2. that Allah Most Merciful has throughout the ages continued to warn mankind against the snares laid by Satan, the avowed enemy of man, and that Allah's Grace was ever on the watch to help all to freedom from those snares.

... إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٦٠)

for that he was to you an enemy avowed? --

وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٦١)

61. "And that ye should worship Me, (for that) this was the Straight Way?

C4007. Thirdly, besides the negative warning, a positive Way was shown to them-the **Straight Way,** the Way of those who receive Allah's Grace and attain to Bliss, the Rope which would save them from shipwreck, the Shield which would save them from assault, the key to the door of proximity to Allah.

وَلَقَدْ أَضَلَّ مِنكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيرًا...

62. "But he did lead astray a great multitude of you.

... أَفَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٢)

Did ye not, then, understand?

C4008. Fourthly, it is pointed out that they were given Understanding (**'aql**), so that by their own faculties they could have judged their own best interests, and yet they betrayed or misused those faculties, and deliberately threw away their chance! And not only a few, but so many! They went gregariously to ruin in spite of the individual care which their Lord and Cherisher bestowed on them!

هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (٦٣)

63. "This is the Hell of which ye were (repeatedly) warned!

C4009. Fifthly, the naked fact is now placed before them,-**the Hell**,-the state of damnation, which they could so easily have avoided!

اصْلَوْهَا الْيَوْمَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٦٤)

64. "Embrace ye the (Fire) this Day, for that ye (persistently) rejected (Truth)."

C4010. As they deliberately and persistently rejected all teaching, guidance, and warnings, they are now told to experience the Fire of Punishment, for it is but the consequence of their own acts.

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَى أَفْوَاهِهِمْ...

65. That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths.

C4011. The ungodly will now be dumbfounded. They will be unable to speak or offer any defence. (The consequences of all acts, which follow according to Allah's Law, are, in Quranic language, attributed to Allah).

... وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٦٥)

But their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did.

But their silence will not matter. Their own hands and feet will speak against them. "Hands and feet" in this connection are symbolical of all the instruments for action which they were given in this life.

The same extended meaning is to be understood for "eyes" in the following verse. Cf. also 41:20-21, where eyes, ears, and skins are all mentioned as bearing witness against such as misused them.

وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَطَمَسْنَا عَلَى أَعْيُنِهِمْ...

66. If it had been Our Will, We could surely have blotted out their eyes;

C4012. "If it had been Our Will": i.e., if such had been the Will and Plan of Allah.

If Allah had not intended to give man his limited free-will, or power of choice, the case would have been different: there would have been no moral responsibility which could have been enforced. They could have had no sight or intelligence, and they could not have been blamed for not seeing or understanding. But such is not the case.

... فَاسْتَبَقُوا الصِّرَاطَ فَأَنَّى يُبْصِرُونَ (٦٦)

then should they have run about groping for the Path, but how could they have seen?

وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَمَسَخْنَاهُمْ عَلَى مَكَانَتِهِمْ...

67. And if it had been Our Will, We could have transformed them (to remain) in their places:

C4013. If Allah's Plan had been to grant no limited freedom of choice or will to men. He could have created them quite different, or could have transformed them into stationary creatures, either in physical form as in the case of trees, or in moral or spiritual qualities, where there was no possibility either of progress or deterioration. Man would then have been unable to reach the heights of grandeur which are now open to him, or, if he goes wrong, to return through the door of repentance and mercy, and still pursue his path of ascent.

But it was Allah's Plan to give man all these privileges, and man must shoulder all the responsibilities that go with them.

... فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مُضِيًّا وَلَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٦٧)

then should they have been unable to move about, nor could they have returned (after error).

Section 5

وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ...

68. If We grant long life to any, We cause him to be reversed in nature:

C4014. This connects on with the last verse.

Everything is possible with Allah. If you doubt how man can be transformed from his present nature, contemplate the transformations he already undergoes in his present nature at different ages.

- As a child powers of mind and body are still undeveloped.
- As he grows, they grow, and certain moral qualities, such as courage, daring, the will to conquer, unfold themselves.
- In extreme old age these are again obscured, and a second childhood supervenes. The back of the man who walked proudly straight and erect is now bent.

If these transformations take place even in his present nature and constitution, how much easier was it for Allah to cast him in an immobile mould?

But Allah granted him instead the high possibilities and responsibilities referred to in the last note.

... أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٦٨)

will they not then understand?

وَمَا عَلَّمْنَاهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنبَغِي لَهُ...

69. We have not instructed the (Prophet) in Poetry, nor is it meet for Him:

C4015. Cf. 26:224 and n. 3237.

Here **"Poetry"** is used as connoting fairy tales, imaginary descriptions, things futile, false, or obscure, such as decadent Poetry is, whereas the Quran is a practical guide, true and clear.

... إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَقُرْآنٌ مُّبِينٌ (٦٩)

this is no less than a Message and a Qur'án making things clear:

... لِيُنذِرَ مَن كَانَ حَيًّا

70. That it may give admonition to any (who are) **alive**,

C4016. "Alive", both in English and Arabic, means not only "having physical fife", but having all the active qualities which we associate with life.

In religious language, those who are not responsive to the realities of the spiritual world are no better than those who are dead. The Message of Allah penetrates the hearts of those who are alive in the spiritual sense.

... وَيَحِقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٠)

and that the **charge** may be proved against those who reject (Truth).

C4017. Cf. 28:63.

If people reject Truth and Faith after they have been admonished and warned, the charge against them, of willful rebellion, is proved. They cannot then plead either ignorance or inadvertence.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا...

71. See they not that it is We Who have created for them -- among the things which Our hands have fashioned --

... أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ (٧١)

cattle, which are under their dominion? --

C4018. If they are blind to other Signs of Allah, they can at least see the simple homely things of life in which they receive so many benefits from Allah's mercy. How is it that wild animals can be domesticated, and in domestication can be so useful to man?

Man can use them for riding or for drought; he can use their flesh for food and drink their milk; he can use their hair or wool.

Cf. 16:66,80: and 23:21-22.

وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ (٧٢)

72. And that We have subjected them to their (use)?

Of them some do carry them and some they eat:

وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ وَمَشَارِبُ...

73. And they have (other) **profits** from them (besides), and they get (milk) to drink.

C4019. Such as skins for leather, furs for warmth, sheep's wool or camel's hair for blankets or textiles, musk for perfume, and so on.

... أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٧٣)

Will they not then be grateful?

C4020. The whole argument turns on this. 'Our teaching is for your own benefit. We confer all these blessings on

you, and yet ye turn away from the Giver of all, and run after your own vain imaginations!

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٧٤)

74. Yet they take (for worship) gods other than Allah, (hoping) that they might be helped!

لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَهُمْ ...

75. They have not the power to help them:

... وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُندٌ مُّحْضَرُونَ (٧٥)

but they will be brought up (before Our Judgment-Seat) as a troop (to be condemned).

C4021. There is some difference of opinion among Commentators as to the exact meaning to be attached to this clause.

As I understand it, the meaning seems to be this.

Man is apt to forget or turn away from the true God, the source of all the good which he enjoys, and to go after imaginary powers in the shape of gods, heroes, men, or abstract things like Science or Nature or Philosophy, or superstitious things like Magic, or Good- Fortune or i11-Fortune, or embodiments of his own selfish desires. He thinks that they might help him in this Life or in the Hereafter (if he believes in a Hereafter).

But they cannot help him: on the contrary all things that are false will be brought up and condemned before Allah's Judgment-seat, and the worshippers of the Falsehoods will also be treated as a troop favouring the Falsehoods and therefore worthy of condemnation.

The Falsehoods, therefore, instead of helping them, will contribute to their condemnation.

فَلَا يَحْزُنكَ قَوْلُهُمْ...

76. Let not their speech, then, grieve thee.

C4022. If men are so foolish as to reject Allah, let not the men of Allah grieve over it. They should do their duty, and leave the rest to Allah. Allah knows all the

open and secret motives that sway the wicked, and Hi Plan must ultimately prevail, however much appearances may be against it at any given time.

... إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ (٧٦)

Verily We know what they hide as well as what they disclose.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ...

77. Doth not man see that it is We Who created Him from sperm?

C4023. Man's disobedience and folly are all the more surprising, seeing that-apart from Allah's greatness and mercy-man is himself such a puny creature, created out of something that is less than a drop in the vast ocean of Existence. Yet man has the hardihood to stand out and dispute with his Maker, and institute idle comparisons as in the next verse!

... فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٧)

Yet behold! he (stands forth) as an open adversary!

وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ...

78. And he makes comparisons for us, and forgets his own (Origin and) Creation:

C4024. That is, man thinks that Allah is like His creatures, who at best have very limited powers, or man draws idle parallels like that mentioned at the end of this verse. 'Who can give life to dry bones, and decomposed ones at that?'

Man certainly cannot, and no power in nature can do that. But why compare the powers and capacities of Allah's creatures with the powers and capacities of the Creator?

The first creation-out of nothing-is far more difficult for us to imagine than a second or subsequent process for which there is already a basis. And Allah has power over all things.

... قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ (٧٨)

he says, "Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?"

...قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ

79. Say, "He will give them life Who created them for the first time!

C4025. Allah's creative artistry is evident in every phase of nature, and it works every minute or second. The more man understands himself and the things within his reach, the more he realises this.

How foolish, then, for any one to set imaginary limits to Allah's powers?

There are more ways of creation than are dreamt of in man's imagination!

... وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧٩)

For He is well-versed in every kind of creation! -

...الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا

80. "The same Who produces for you fire out of the green tree,

C4026. Even older and more primitive than the method of striking fire against steel and flint is the method of using twigs of trees for the purpose.

In the Encyclopedia of Britannica, 14th edition. 9:262, will be found a picture of British Guiana boys making a fire by rotating a stick in a round hole in a piece of wood lying on the ground.

The Arab method was to use a wooden instrument called the ***Zinad***. It consisted of two pieces to be rubbed together. The upper one was called the ***'Afar*** or ***Zand***, and the lower the ***Markh***.

The ***markh*** is a twig from a kind of spreading tree, the Cynanchuin viminale, of which the branches are bare, without leaves or thorns. When they are tangled together, and a wind blows, they get ignited and strike fire (Lane's Arabic Lexicon).

In modern Arabic ***Zand*** is by analogy applied to the flint pierce used for striking fire with steel.

... فَإِذَا أَنتُم مِّنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ (٨٠)

when behold! ye kindle therewith (your own fires)!

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُم...

81. "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof?" --

C4027. Cf. 79:27.

Which is the more difficult to create,- man, or the heavens and the earth, with all creatures?

Allah created the heavens and the earth, with all creatures, and He can create worlds and worlds like these in infinity. To Him it is small matter to raise you up for the Hereafter.

... بَلَى وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨١)

Yea,

indeed! for He is the Creator Supreme, of skill and knowledge (infinite)!

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ ...

82. Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is,

C4028. And His creation is not dependent on time, or instruments or means, or any conditions whatsoever. Existence waits on His Will, or Plan, or Intention. The moment He wills a thing, it becomes His Word or Command, and the thing forthwith comes into existence.

Cf. 2:117; 16:40, n. 2066; etc.

... كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٨٢)

"Be," and it is!

فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

83. So glory to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things;

... وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٨٣)

and to Him will ye be all brought back.

C4029. All things were created by Allah; are maintained by Him; and will go back to Him.

But the point of special interest to man is that man will also be brought back to Allah and is answerable to Him, and to Him alone. This Message is the core of Revelation; it explains the meaning of the Hereafter; and it fitly closes a Surah specially connected with the name (Ya-Sin) of the Holy Prophet.



رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ

Lord of the heavens and of the earth, and all between them,
and Lord of every point at the rising of the sun!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Saffat

الصَّافَّاتِ

Introduction and Summary

As explained in the Introduction to Surah 34, this is fourth of a series of Surahs in which the mysteries of the spiritual world are manifested in different ways, tending to defeat and final expiration of Evil. The defeat of Evil is throughout connected with Revelation, and here the ranged fight is illustrated by a reference to the angels in heaven and to the earlier Prophets in our earthly history, from Noah to Jonah. In chronology, this Surah belongs to the early middle Makkan period.

Summary- Through all mysteries of the heavens and the earth, there is sorting out of the evil against good: their final destinations contrasted (37:1-74, C.197).

Peace and victory came to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, Ilyas and Lut, in their conflicts with Evil (37:75-138, and C.198).

So was in with Jonah when he glorified Allah. But men ascribe to Allah what is unworthy of Him; Allah's Prophets strive for His glory, and shall be victorious (37:139-182, and C.199).

C.197 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(37:1-74)

Allah is One, the Source and Centre
Of all affairs, and we must work
In discipline, harmony, and unity
To put down Evil. The Hereafter
Is sure, when personal responsibility
Will be enforced. For the true
And sincere servants of Allah,
There will be the highest Bliss,
Unmixed and everlasting;
For those who defy Allah's Law
There will be the deepest enduring
Misery. Which will men Choose?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالصَّافَّاتِ صَفًّا (١)

1. By those who range themselves in ranks.

C4030. At a later stage, we shall study the general meaning of the adjurations in the Quran indicated by the particle **wa**.

See appendix XI.

Here we may note that the last Surah (Yasin) practically began with the adjuration "by the Quran, full of wisdom", emphasizing the fact that Revelation was the evidence by which we could learn the highest wisdom of the spiritual world. Here our attention is called in three verses or clauses, to three definite attitudes which illustrate the triumph of Good and the frustration of Evil.

See the notes following.

C4031. Two questions arise:

1. are the doers of the three things noted in verses 1-3 the same persons, whose actions or qualities are differently described, or are they three distinct sets of persons?

2. in either case, who are they?

As to 1 the most authoritative view is that the three clauses describe the same set of persons in different aspects.

As to 2 some take them to refer to angels, and others understand by them the good men, the men of God, who strive and range themselves in Allah's service.

The words are perfectly general, and I interpret them to refer to both classes. The feminine form is grammatically used in Arabic idiom for the indefinite plural. In 37:165 below, the word **saffan** is used in the definite plural, and seems to be spoken by these beings, angels or men of God or both, according to how we interpret this verse.

فَالزَّاجِرَاتِ زَجْرًا (٢)

2. And so are strong in repelling (evil),

C4032. The three acts in verses 1-3 are consecutive, as shown by the particle **fa**.

I understand them to mean that angels and good men

- are ever ready to range themselves in ranks in the service of Allah and work in perfect discipline and accord at all times;

- that they check and frustrate evil wherever they find it and they are strengthened in doing so by their discipline and their ranging themselves in Tanks; and

- that this service furthers the Kingdom of Allah and proclaims His Message and His glory to all creation.

فَالتَّالِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا (٣)

3. And thus proclaim the message (of Allah)!

إِنَّ إِلَٰهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ (٤)

4. Verily, verily, your Allah is One! --

C4033. That divine Message is summed up in the gospel of Divine Unity, on which the greatest emphasis is laid: "verily, verily your God is One".

It is a fact intimately connected with our own life and destiny.

- 'Your Lord is one Who cares for you and cherishes you;

- you are dear to Him. And He is One:

- it is only He that you have to look to, the source of all goodness, love, and power.

- You are not the sport of many contending forces or blind chances. There is complete harmony and unity in heaven and you have to put yourselves into unison with it-by discipline in ranks, by unity of plan and purpose in repelling evil, and by concerted action in promoting the Kingdom of Allah.

Here is the mystery of the manifold variety of creation pointing to the absolute Unity of the Creator.

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

5. Lord of the heavens and of the earth, and all between them,

وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ (٥)...

and Lord of every point at the rising of the sun!

C4034. Allah is the Lord of everything that exists- 'the heavens and the earth, and all between them'.

He is the Lord of the Mashariq,-of every point at the rising of the sun.

As the Commentators tell us, there are in the solar year only two equinoctial days, when the sun rises due east: on every other the sun rises at a shifting point either north or south of due east.

In 7:137 we have Mashariq al ardhi wa magaribaha, where the plural of the words for East and West is negligible, as the conjunction of the two embraces all points.

The same may be said of 70:40, where Allah is called "Lord of all points in the East and the West".

If we are speaking of longitudes, they may embrace all latitudes. In 55:17 Allah is called "Lord of the two Easts and the two Wests", referring to the extreme points in either case.

A cursory reader may ask, why is only the East referred to here?

The reply is that it is not so much the East as the rising of the sun, on which stress is laid. The Arabic **mashriq** or **mashariq** is close enough to the root-word **sharaqa**, to suggest, not so much the East as the rising of the sun, especially when the plural form is used.

The glorious sun rises from different points, as seen by us, but it illuminates the whole heaven and earth. It is an emblem of Unity.

إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةٍ الْكَوَاكِبِ (٦)

6. We have indeed decked the lower heaven with beauty (in) the stars --

C4035. Cf. 72:8-9. (Eds.).

C4036. 'Stars' may be taken here in the popular sense, as referring to fixed stars, planets, comets, shooting stars, etc.

On a clear night the beauty of the starry heavens is proverbial. Here they are meant to illustrate two points:

- their marvelous beauty and their groupings and motions (apparent or real) manifest and typify the Design and Harmony of the One true Creator: and
- the power and glory behind them typify that there is a guard against the assaults of Evil (see verse 7 below).

وَحِفْظًا مِّن كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ (٧)

7. (For beauty) and for guard against all obstinate rebellious evil spirits.

C4037. Verses 7-11 seem to refer to shooting stars, Cf. 15:17-18, and notes 1951-53.

The 'heavens typify not only beauty but power. The Good in Allah's world is guarded and protected against every assault of Evil. The Evil is not part of the heavenly system: it is a thing in outlawry, merely a self-willed rebellion, - "cast away on every side, repulsed under a perpetual penalty" (verses 8-9).

لَا يَسَّمَّعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَى...

8. (So) they should not strain their ears in the direction of the Exalted Assembly

C4038. We can form a mental picture of the Court of the Most High, in the highest heaven, conforming to the highest idea we can form of goodness, beauty, purity, and grandeur.

The Exalted Assembly of angels is given some knowledge of the Plan and Will of Allah. Evil is altogether foreign to such an atmosphere, but is actuated by feelings of jealousy and curiosity. It tries to approach by stealth and overhear something from the august Assembly. It is repulsed and pursued by a flaming fire, of which we can form some idea in our physical world by the piercing trail of a shooting star.

...وَيُقْذَفُونَ مِن كُلِّ جَانِبٍ (٨)

but be cast away from every side.

...دُحُورًا

9. Repulsed,

...وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ (٩)

for they are under a perpetual penalty.

إِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ (١٠)

10. Except such as snatch away something by stealth, and they are pursued by a flaming fire, of piercing brightness.

C4039. See last note and Cf. 15:18 and notes 1951-53.

... فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ

11. Just ask their opinion:

C4040. "Their": "they" are the doubters, the evil ones, the deniers of Allah's grace and mercy, who laugh at Revelation and disbelieve in a Hereafter.

... أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَم مَّنْ خَلَقْنَا...

are they the more difficult to create, or the (other) beings We have created?

Are they more important or more difficult to create than the wonderful variety of beings in Allah's spacious Creation?

Do they forget their own lowly state, as having been created from muddy clay?

...إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُم مِّن طِينٍ لَّازِبٍ (١١)

Them have We created out of a sticky clay!

C4041. Cf. 6:2;

بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ (١٢)

12. Truly dost thou marvel, while they ridicule,

C4042. It is indeed strange that unregenerate man should forget, on the one hand, his lowly-origin, and on the other hand, his high Destiny, as conferred upon him by the grace and mercy of Allah.

The indictment of him here comprises four counts:

- they ridicule the teaching of Truth;
- instead of profiting by admonition, they pay no heed;
- when Allah's Signs are brought home to them, they ridicule them as much as they ridiculed the teaching of Truth: and
- when they have to acknowledge incontestable facts, they give them false names like "sorcery", which imply fraud or something which has no relation to their life, although the facts touch the inner springs of their life intimately.

وَإِذَا ذُكِّرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ (١٣)

13. And, when they are admonished, pay no heed --

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَسْتَسْخِرُونَ (١٤)

14. And, when they see a Sign, turn it to mockery,

وَقَالُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ (١٥)

15. And say,
"This is nothing but evident sorcery!

أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (١٦)

16. "What! when we die, and become dust and bones, shall we (then) be raised up (again)?

أَوَآبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ (١٧)

17. "And also our fathers of old?"

C4043. Although the Hereafter, is the most solid facts in our intelligent existence, materialists deny them. They cannot believe that they could have any existence beyond the grave-still less their ancestors who died ages and ages ago: how could they ever come to life again?

قُلْ نَعَمْ...

18. Say thou:

"Yea,

...وَأَنتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ (١٨)

and ye shall then be humiliated (on account of your evil)."

C4044. They are assured that the future life is a solid fact, but that it will be in very different conditions from those they know now.

All their present arrogance will have been humbled in the dust. There will be another plane, in which souls will have experiences quite different from those in their probationary life here. In that life the virtues they lacked will count, and the arrogance they hugged will be brought low.

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ ...

19. Then it will be a single (compelling) cry;

C4045. Cf. 36:29, 49, and 53.

... فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنظُرُونَ (١٩)

and behold, they will begin to see!

C4046. Their spiritual blindness will then leave them. But they will be surprised at the suddenness of their disillusion.

وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (٢٠)

20. They will say, "Ah! woe to us! This is the Day of Judgement!"

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٢١)

21. (A voice will say,)

"This is the Day of Sorting Out, whose truth ye (once) denied!"

C4047. The Day of Judgment is the day of sorting out. Cf. 36:59.

Good and evil will finally be separated, unlike the apparently inexplicable conditions in the present probationary life, when they seem to be mixed together.

Section 2

احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (٢٢)

22. "Bring ye up," it shall be said, "The wrongdoers and their **wives**, and the things they worshipped --

C4048. That is, if their **wives** were also wrong-doers. They are separately mentioned, because the Arabic phrase for **"wrong-doers"** is of the masculine gender. All the associates in wrong-doing will be marshaled together. There will be personal responsibility: neither husband nor wife can lay the blame on the other.

مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

23. "Besides Allah,

فَاهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ (٢٣)

and lead them to the Way to the (Fierce) Fire!

وَقِفُوهُمْ...

24. "But stop them,

C4049. The scene here is after judgment. As, in an earthly tribunal, the prisoner or his advocate is asked why sentence should not be pronounced upon him, so here those who are proved to have been guilty of wrong are allowed to consider if anything or any one can help them. Then comes the exposure of the misleaders.

إِنَّهُم مَّسْئُولُونَ (٢٤)...

for they must be asked:

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنَاصَرُونَ (٢٥)

25. "'What is the matter with you that ye help not each other?'"

C4050. Obviously no one can stand and intercede, for it is a question of personal responsibility for each soul. No one can help another.

بَلْ هُمُ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ (٢٦)

26. Nay,

but that day they shall submit (to Judgment);

C4051. All the previous arrogance of this life will be gone, but they will face each other, and those who were given a false lead, as in the story of Pharaoh (Cf. 20:79), will question their misleaders as in the following verses.

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٢٧)

27. And they will turn to one another, and question one another.

قَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ (٢٨)

28. They will say: "It was ye who used to come to us from the right hand (of power and authority)!"

C4052. This is the mutual recrimination of the sinners-those who sinned, against those whose instigation or evil example led them into sin.

The misleaders in the life here below often used their power and influence to spread evil.

The **"right hand"** is the hand of power and authority. Instead of using it for righteous purposes, they used it for evil selfishly for their own advantage, and mischievously for the degradation of others.

قَالُوا بَل لَّمْ تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٩)

29. They will reply:

"Nay, ye yourselves had no faith!

C4053. But the fact that others mislead, or that their evil example is before us, does not justify us in falling from right conduct. Faith should save us from the fall.

But if we have ourselves no Faith-in righteousness, or a future life, or the reality of Allah's Law, how can we blame others?

The misleaders can well say, "You will be judged according to your misdeeds!"

The responsibility is personal, and cannot be shifted on to others. The others may get a double punishment,-for their own evil, and for misleading their weaker brethren. But the weaker brethren cannot go free from responsibility for their own deeds; for evil means a personal rebellion against Allah, if we believe in a personal God.

Evil has no authority over us, except in so far as we deliberately choose it.

وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ...

30. "Nor had we any authority over you.

...بَلْ كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا طَاغِينَ (٣٠)

Nay, it was ye who were a people in obstinate rebellion!

...فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا

31. "So now has been proved true, against us, the Word of our Lord

C4054. Allah's decree of justice requires that every soul should taste the consequences of its own sins, and that decree must be fulfilled.

No excuses can serve. It is only Allah's mercy that can save.

...إِنَّا لَذَائِقُونَ (٣١)

that we shall indeed (have to) taste (the punishment of our sins):

فَأَغْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ (٣٢)

32. "We led you astray: for truly we were ourselves astray."

C4055. Further, the misleaders can well urge against those who reproach them for misleading them:

"How could you expect anything better from us?

You were already warned by Allah's Message that we were astray."

فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ (٣٣)

33. Truly, that day, they will (all) share in the Penalty.

إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ (٣٤)

34. Verily that is how We shall deal with Sinners.

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٣٥)

35. For they, when they were told that there is no god except Allah, would puff themselves up with Pride.

C4056. Selfish arrogance was the seed of sin and rebellion: 2:34 (of Satan): 28:39 (of Pharaoh); etc.

It is that kind of arrogance which prevents man from mending his life and conduct. When he speaks of ancestral ways, or public opinion, or national honour, he is usually thinking of himself or of a small clique which thrives on injustice.

The recognition of Allah, the one true God, as the only standard of life and conduct, the Eternal Reality, cuts out Self, and is therefore disagreeable to Sin. If false gods are imagined, who themselves would have weaknesses that fit in with sin, they give countenance to evils, and it becomes difficult to give them up, unless Allah's grace comes to our assistance. (R).

وَيَقُولُونَ أَئِنَّا لَتَارِكُوا آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ (٣٦)

36. And say: "What! shall we give up our gods for the sake of a Poet possessed?"

C4057. Possessed of an evil spirit, or mad. Such was the charge which the Unbelievers sometimes leveled at the holy Prophet in the early stages of his preaching.

بَلْ جَاءَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٣٧)

37. Nay!

He has come with the (very) Truth, and he confirms (the Message of) the messengers (before Him).

C4058. The message of Islam, so far from being "mad" or in any way peculiar, is eminently conformable to reason and the true facts of nature as created by Allah.

It is the Truth in the purest sense of the term, and confirms the Message of all true Messengers that ever lived.

إِنَّكُمْ لَذَائِقُو الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ (٣٨)

38. Ye shall indeed taste of the Grievous Penalty --

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٩)

39. But it will be no more than the retribution of (the Evil) that ye have wrought --

C4059. Justice demands that those who sow evil should reap the fruit, but the punishment is due to their own conduct and not to anything external to themselves.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٤٠)

40. But the sincere (and devoted) servants of Allah --

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (٤١)

41. For them is a Sustenance Determined,

C4060. "Sustenance": correlated with the Fruits mentioned below: see next verse.

C4061. "Determined": Malum: the reward of the Blessed will not be a chance or a fleeting thing. It will follow a firm Decree of Allah, on principles that can be known and understood.

فَوَاكِهُ...

42. Fruits (Delights),

C4062. "Fruits": Cf. 36:57, and n. 4003.

The Garden's Delights are figured forth from parallel experiences in our present life, and follow an ascending order:

- Food and Fruits;
- Gardens of Bliss, (with all their charm, design, greenery, birds' songs, fountains, etc.);

- the Home of Happiness and Dignity, with congenial company seated on Thrones;
- Delicious Drinks from crystal Springs, for social pleasure;
- and the society of Companions of the opposite sex, with beauty and charm but none of the grossness too often incidental to such companionship in this life.

وَهُم مُّكْرَمُونَ (٤٢)...

and they (shall enjoy) honor and dignity.

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (٤٣)

43. In Gardens of Felicity.

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ (٤٤)

44. Facing each other on Thrones (of dignity):

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِكَأْسٍ مِن مَّعِينٍ (٤٥)

45. Round will be passed to them a Cup from a clear-flowing fountain,

بَيْضَاء لَذَّةٍ لِّلشَّارِبِينَ (٤٦)

46. Crystal-white, of a taste delicious to those who drink (thereof),

لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنزَفُونَ (٤٧)

47. Free from headiness;

nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom.

C4063. The passing round of the social cup, as in the case of other pleasures, is without any of the drawbacks and evil accompaniments of the pleasures of this world, which are taken as types.

In drink there is no intoxication: in fruit there is no satiety.

Cf. Dante: "the bread of Angels upon which One liveth here and grows not sated by it." (Paradiso, Canto II., Longfellow's translation.)

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ (٤٨)

48. And beside them will be chaste women;

restraining their glances, with big eyes (of wonder and beauty).

C4064. In the emblem used here, again, the pure type of chaste womanhood is figured. They are chaste, not bold with their glances: but their eyes are big with wonder and beauty, prefiguring grace, innocence, and a refined capacity of appreciation and admiration.

كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُونٌ (٤٩)

49. As if they were (delicate) eggs closely guarded.

C4065. This is usually understood to refer to the delicate complexion of a beautiful woman, which is compared to the transparent shell of eggs in the nest, closely guarded by the mother-bird; the shell is warm and free from stain.

In 55:58 the phrase used is "like rubies and coral", referring to the red or pink of a beautiful complexion.

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٥٠)

50. Then they will turn to one another and question one another.

C4066. Cf. above, 37:27, where the same phrase is used in the reverse conditions.

In each case there is a going back to the earlier memories or experiences of this life.

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ (٥١)

51. One of them will start the talk and say:

"I had an intimate companion (on the earth),

C4067. This companion was a skeptic, who laughed at Religion and a Hereafter. How the tables are now turned! The devout man backed up his Faith with a good life and is now in Bliss: the other was a cynic and made a mess of his life, and is now burning in the Fire. (R).

يَقُولُ أَئِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ (٥٢)

52. "Who used to say,

'What! art thou amongst those who bear witness to the truth (of the Message)?

أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَئِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ (٥٣)

53. "'When we die and become dust and bones, shall we indeed receive rewards and punishments?'"

قَالَ هَلْ أَنتُم مُّطَّلِعُونَ (٥٤)

54. (A voice) said: "Would ye like to look down?"

فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ (٥٥)

55. He looked down and saw him in the midst of the Fire.

C4068. He is allowed a peep into the state which he so narrowly escaped by the grace of Allah.

قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كِدتَّ لَتُرْدِينِ (٥٦)

56. He said:

"By Allah! thou wast little short of bringing me to perdition!

وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي ...

57. "Had it not been for the Grace of my Lord,

C4069. And he gratefully acknowledges his short-comings: "I should have been a sinner just like this, but for the grace of Allah!"

He sees that if he had erred it would have been no excuse to plead the other man's example. He had Faith and was saved, to walk in the path of righteousness.

لَكُنتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ (٥٧) ...

I should certainly have been among those brought (there)!

أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ (٥٨)

58. "Is it (the case) that we shall not die,

إِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ (٥٩)

59. "Except our first death, and that we shall not be punished?"

C4070. After he realises the great danger from which he narrowly escaped, his joy is so great that he can hardly believe it!

Is the danger altogether past now?

Are the portals of death closed for ever?

Is he safe now from the temptations which will bring him to ruin and punishment?

إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٦٠)

60. Verily this is the supreme achievement!

C4071. The answer is: Yes.

"Beyond the flight of Time. Beyond the realm of Death. There surely is some blessed clime, Where Life is not a breath!"

In the words of Longfellow this was an aspiration on this earth. In the Hereafter it is a realisation!

Some interpret verses 60-62 as a continuation of the speech of the man in heaven. The meaning would in that case be the same.

لِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا فَلْيَعْمَلْ الْعَامِلُونَ (٦١)

61. For the like of this let all strive, who wish to strive.

أَذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ نُّزُلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ (٦٢)

62. Is that the better entertainment or the Tree of Zaqqum?

C4072. Cf. 17:60, n. 2250.

This bitter tree of Hell is in contrast with the beautiful Garden of heaven with its delicious fruits.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِّلظَّالِمِينَ (٦٣)

63. For We have truly made it (as) a trial for the wrongdoers.

C4073. This dreadful bitter Tree of Hell is truly a trial to the wrong-doers.

- It grows at the bottom of Hell;
- even its fruit-stalks, which should have been tender, are like the heads of devils:
- its produce is eaten voraciously;
- on top of it is a boiling mixture to cut up their entrails (see next note); and
- every time they complete this round of orgies they return to the same game.

A truly lurid picture, but more lurid in reality are the stages of Evil.

- It takes its rise in the lowest depths of corrupted human nature;
- its tenderest affections are degraded to envy and hate;
- the appetite for Evil grows with what it feeds on;
- its "cures" serve but to aggravate the disease; and
- the chain of evil is unending; one round is followed by another in interminable succession.

إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ (٦٤)

64. For it is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-fire:

طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُؤُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ (٦٥)

65. The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils:

فَإِنَّهُمْ لَآكِلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِؤُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ (٦٦)

66. Truly they will eat **thereof** and fill their bellies therewith.

C4074. The parable of fruits and drinks in the contrasted fortunes of the Good and the Evil is further elaborated in 47:15, where the boiling water given to the evil ones cuts up their entrails.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ (٦٧)

67. Then on top of that they will be given a mixture made of boiling water.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ (٦٨)

68. Then shall their return be to the (Blazing) Fire.

C4075. When they eat of the zaqqum in the lowest depths of hell, they are apparently brought up to drink of the mixture as a further punishment, after which they go back to repeat the round.

إِنَّهُمْ أَلْفَوْا آبَاءهُمْ ضَالِّينَ (٦٩)

69. Truly they found their fathers on the wrong Path;

فَهُمْ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ (٧٠)

70. So they (too) were rushed down on their footsteps!

C4076. A grim reproach. 'You found your fathers doing wrong; and you must rush headlong in their footsteps to perdition!'

وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٧١)

71. And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray --

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِم مُّنذِرِينَ (٧٢)

72. But We sent aforetime, among them, (messengers) to admonish them --

C4077. It is human to err. The error is forgiven if there is repentance and amendment. The point is that Allah in His mercy at all times in history sent messengers and teachers to give His Message, and men deliberately rejected that Message.

فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (٧٣)

73. Then see what was the end of those who were admonished (but heeded not) --

C4078. It is on the reception or rejection of Allah's teachings and guidance that judgment will come. In this world itself, see what is the teaching of history.

Unrighteousness and wrong-doing never prosper in the long run.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٧٤)

74. Except the sincere (and devoted) servants of Allah.

C4079. But there is always a band of sincere and devoted men who serve Allah, and the highest form of life is open to them.

Note that this verse occurs at 37:40 above, where the argument of the difference between the fates of the righteous and the unrighteous was begun. Here it is rounded off with the same phrase, and now we proceed to take illustrations from the early Prophets.

C.198 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(37:75-138)

The Prophets of Allah formed a series
That worked in Allah's service to instruct
Their fellow men. In case of distress
Allah helped and delivered them. Men did flout
And persecute them, but they carried out
Their mission with constancy; and Allah's Purpose
Always won, to the destruction of Evil.
So was it in the story of Noah and the Flood.
Of Abraham the True, of Ismail
Ready for self-sacrifice, of Isaac
The righteous, of Moses and Aaron, of Elias
And Lut; all men of Faith, who receive
The blessings of prosperity and Peace
And Salutation from Allah Most Gracious.

Section 3

وَلَقَدْ نَادَانَا نُوحٌ...

75. (In the days of old), Noah cried to Us,

C4080. Cf. 21:76-77.

The story of Noah occurs in many places: here the point is that when men gird themselves against evil, Allah protects them, and Evil cannot triumph against Allah's Plan.

...فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيبُونَ (٧٥)

and We are the Best to hear prayer.

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٦)

76. And We delivered him and his people from the Great Calamity.

C4081. The Deluge, the Flood of Noah. The main story will be found in 11:25-48.

وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ (٧٧)

77. And made his progeny to endure (on this earth);

C4082. Noah's posterity survived the Flood in the Ark, while the rest perished.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (٧٨)

78. And We left (this blessing) for him among generations to come in later times:

C4083. His name is remembered for ever, commencing a new era in religious history.

Note that the words in verses 78-81, with slight modifications, form a sort of refrain to the following paragraphs about Abraham, Moses, and Elias, but not about Lut and Jonah.

Lut was a nephew of Abraham, and may be supposed to belong to the story of Abraham. Jonah's career nearly ended in a tragedy for himself, and his people got a

further lease of power "for a time" (37:148). And both Lut and Jonah belong to a limited local tradition,

سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٩)

79. "Peace and salutation to Noah among the nations!"

C4084. The story of the Flood is found in some form or other among all nations, and not only among those who follow the Mosaic tradition.

- In Greek tradition, the hero of the Flood is Deukalion, with his wife Pyrrha:
- in Indian tradition (Shatapatha Brahmana and Mahabharata) it is the sage Manu and the Fish.
- The Chinese tradition of a great Flood is recorded in Sha-King.
- Among American Indians the tradition was common to many tribes.

إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٨٠)

80. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨١)

81. For he was one of Our believing Servants.

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (٨٢)

82. Then the rest We overwhelmed in the Flood.

وَإِنَّ مِن شِيعَتِهِ لَإِبْرَاهِيمَ (٨٣)

83. Verily among those who followed his Way was Abraham.

C4085. The main story will be found in 16:51-73; but the episode about his readiness and that of his son to submit to the most extreme form of self-sacrifice under trial (in verses 102-107 below) is told here for the first time, as this Surah deals with the theme, "Not my will, but Thine be done!"

In **"followed his way"**, the pronoun **"his"** refers to Noah, **"he"**, of verse 81 above.

إِذْ جَاء رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (٨٤)

84. Behold, He approached his Lord with a sound heart.

C4086. A sound heart: qalb salim: a heart that is pure, and unaffected by the diseases that afflict others.

As the **heart** in Arabic is taken to be not only the seat of feelings and affections, but also of intelligence and resulting action, it implies the whole character.

Cf. Abraham's title of Hanif (the True): 2:135 and n. 134.

Cf. also 26:89: "only he will prosper who brings to Allah a sound heart."

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٨٥)

85. Behold, he said to his father and to his people,
"What is that which ye worship?

أَئِفْكًا آلِهَةً دُونَ اللَّهِ تُرِيدُونَ (٨٦)

86. "Is it a Falsehood -- gods other than Allah -- that ye desire?

C4087. False worship-worship of idols or stars or symbols, or Mammon or Self-is due either to false and degrading conceptions of Allah, or to a sort of make-believe, where practice is inconsistent with knowledge or ignores the inner promptings of Conscience. Abraham's challenge to his people is: 'Are you fools or hypocrites?'

فَمَا ظَنُّكُم بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧)

87. "Then what is your idea about the Lord of the Worlds?"

C4088. 'Do you not realise that the real Creator is One-above all the forms and superstitions that you associate with Him?'

فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ (٨٨)

88. Then did he cast a glance at the stars.

فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (٨٩)

89. And he said, "I am indeed sick (at heart)!"

C4089. The grief was really preying on his mind and soul, that he should be associated with such falsehoods.

His father himself was among the chief supporters of such falsehoods, and his people were given up wholly to them. He could not possibly share in their mummeries, and they left him in disgust. Then he made his practical protest in the manner narrated in 21:56-64.

فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ (٩٠)

90. So they turned away from him, and departed.

فَرَاغَ إِلَى آلِهَتِهِمْ فَقَالَ...

91. Then did he turn to their gods and said,

...أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٩١)

"Will ye not eat (of the offerings before you)?...

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنطِقُونَ (٩٢)

92. "What is the matter with you that ye speak not (intelligently)?"

... فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ

93. Then did he turn upon them,

C4090. See the reference in the last note.

... ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ (٩٣)

striking (them) with the right hand.

C4091. With the right hand: as the right hand is the hand of power, the phrase means that he struck them with might and main and broke them.

فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَزِفُّونَ (٩٤)

94. Then came (the worshippers) with hurried steps and faced (him).

قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُونَ (٩٥)

95. He said:

"Worship ye that which ye have (yourselves) carved?

C4092. His action was a challenge, and he drives home the challenge now with argument. 'Do you worship your own handiwork?

Surely worship is due to Him Who made you and made possible your handiwork!'

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦)

96. "But Allah has created you and your handiwork!"

قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُنْيَانًا...

97. They said:

"Build him a furnace,

فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ (٩٧)

and throw him into the blazing fire!"

C4093. The argument of Abraham was so sound that it could not be met by argument. In such cases Evil resorts to violence, or secret plotting. Here there was both violence and secret plotting.

The violence consisted in throwing him into a blazing Furnace. But by the mercy of Allah the fire did not harm him (21:69), and so they resorted to plotting. But the plotting, as the next verse (37:98) shows, was a boomerang that recoiled on their own heads.

فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا...

98. (This failing), they then sought a stratagem against him,

C4094. Cf. 21:71.

Their plot against the righteous Abraham failed. Abraham migrated from the country (Chaldea, Babylon, and Assyria) and prospered in Syria and Palestine. It was his persecutors that suffered humiliation.

...فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ (٩٨)

but We made them the ones most humiliated!

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَى رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ (٩٩)

99. He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me!

C4095. This was the Hijrah of Abraham. He left his people and his land, because the Truth was dearer to him than the ancestral falsehoods of his people. He trusted himself to Allah, and under Allah's guidance he laid the foundations of great peoples.

See n. 2725 to 21:69.

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠٠)

100. "O my Lord! grant me a righteous (son)!"

فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ (١٠١)

101. So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear.

C4096. This was in the fertile land of Syria and Palestine. The boy thus born was, according to Muslim tradition, the first-born son of Abraham, viz., Ismail. The name itself is from the root *Samia*, to hear, because Allah had heard Abraham's prayer (verse 100).

Abraham's age when Ismail was born was 86 (Gen 16:16).

C4097. The boy's character was to be **Halim**, **"forbearing"**.

This title is also applied to Abraham (in 9:114 and 11:75).

It refers to the patient way in which both father and son cheerfully offered to suffer any self-sacrifice in order to obey the Command of Allah.

See next verse.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ...

102. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him,

...قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ ...

he said:

"O my son! I see in vision...

C4098. Where did this vision occur?

- The Muslim view is that it was in or near Makkah.
- Some would identify it with the valley of Mina, six miles north of Makkah, where a commemoration sacrifice is annually celebrated as a rite of the Hajj on the tenth of *Dhu al Hijjah*, the 'Id of Sacrifice, in Memory of this Sacrifice of Abraham and Ismail (see n. 217 to 2:197).
- Others say that the original place of sacrifice was near the hill of Marwa (the companion hill to Safa, 2:158), which is associated with the infancy of Ismail.

... أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ...

... that I offer thee in sacrifice:

C4099. At what stage in Abraham's history did this occur?

See n. 2725 to 21:69.

It was obviously after his arrival in the land of Cannan and after Ismail had grown up to years of discretion.

Was it before or after the building of the Ka'bah (2:127)?

There are no data on which this question can be answered. But we may suppose it was before that event, and that event may itself have been commemorative.

...فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى...

now see what is thy view!"

...قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ...

(The son) said:

"O my father! do as thou art commanded:

...سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاء اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٠٢)

thou will find me, if Allah so wills, one practicing Patience and Constancy!"

... فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا

103. So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah),

C4100. Note that the sacrifice was demanded of both Abraham and Ismail. It was a trial of the will of the father and the son. By way of trial the father had the command conveyed to him in a vision. He consulted the son. The son readily consented, and offered to stand true to his promise if his self-sacrifice was really required.

The whole thing is symbolical. Allah does not require the flesh and blood of animals (22:37), much less of human beings. But he does require the giving of our whole being to Allah, the symbol of which is that we should give up something very dear to us, if Duty requires that sacrifice. (R).

... وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (١٠٣)

and He had laid Him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice),

C4101. Our version may be compared with the Jewish-Christian version of the present Old Testament.

The Jewish tradition, in order to glorify the younger branch of the family, descended from Isaac, ancestor of the Jews, as against the elder branch, descended from Ismail, ancestor of the Arabs, refers this sacrifice to Isaac (Gen. 12:1-18).

Now Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen. 21:5), while Ismail was born to Abraham when Abraham was 86 years old (Gen. 16:16). Ismail was therefore 14 years older than Isaac.

During his first 14 years Ismail was the only son of Abraham; at no time was Isaac the only son of Abraham. Yet, in speaking of the sacrifice, the Old Testament says (Gen. 22:2): "And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Issac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah: and offer him there for a burnt offering..."

This slip shows at any rate which was the older version, and how it was overlaid, like the present Jewish records, in the interests of a tribal religion. The "land of Moriah" is not clear: it was three days' journey from Abraham's place (Gen. 22:4). There is less warrant for identifying it with the hill of Moriah on which Jerusalem was afterwards built than with the hill of Marwa which is identified with the Arab tradition about Ismail.

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (١٠٤)

104. We called out to him,

"O Abraham!

C4102. In the Biblical version Isaac's consent is not taken; in fact Isaac asks, 'where is the lamb for sacrifice?' and is told that 'God would provide it'. It is a complete human sacrifice like those to Moloch.

In our version it is as much a sacrifice by the will of Ismail as by that of Abraham. And in any case it is symbolic:

"this was obviously a trial": "thou hast already fulfilled by vision": etc.

قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا...

105. "Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" --

...إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٠٥)

thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ (١٠٦)

106. For this was obviously a trial --

وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذِبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٠٧)

107. And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice:

C4103. The adjective qualifying "sacrifice" here, **'azim,** (great, momentous) may be understood both in a literal and a figurative sense.

- In a literal sense it implies that a fine sheep or ram was substituted symbolically.

- The figurative sense is even more important. It was indeed a great and momentous occasion, when two men, with concerted will, "ranged themselves in the ranks" of those to whom self-sacrifice in the service of Allah was the supreme thing in life. In this sense, said Jesus, "he that loseth his life for my sake shall it". (Matt, 10:39). (R).

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١٠٨)

108. And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times:

C4104. Cf. above, 37:78-81 and n. 4083.

سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ (١٠٩)

109. "Peace and salutation to Abraham!"

كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١١٠)

110. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١١)

111. For he was one of Our believing Servants.

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٢)

112. And We gave him the good news of Isaac -- a prophet -- one of the Righteous.

C4105. Isaac was Abraham's second son, born of Sarah, when Abraham was 100 years of age. See n. 4101.

He was also blessed and became the ancestor of the Jewish people. See next note.

وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى إِسْحَقَ...

113. We blessed him and Isaac:

...وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ (١١٣)

but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to their own souls.

C4106. So long as the Children of Israel upheld the righteous banner of Allah, they enjoyed Allah's blessing,

and their history is a portion of sacred history. When they fell from grace, they did not stop Allah's Plan: they injured their own souls.

Section 4

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَى مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (١١٤)

114. Again, (of old,) We bestowed Our favor on Moses and Aaron.

C4107. The story of Moses is told in numerous passages of the Quran. The passages most illustrative of the present passage will be found in 28:4 (oppression of the Israelites in Egypt) and 20:77-79 (the Israelites triumphant over their enemies when the latter were drowned in the Red Sea).

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ (١١٥)

115. And We delivered them and their people from (their) Great Calamity;

C4108. What could have been a greater calamity to them than that they should have been held in slavery by the Egyptians, that their male children should have been killed and their female children should have been saved alive for the Egyptians?

وَنَصَرْنَاهُمْ فَكَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ (١١٦)

116. And We helped them, so they overcame (their troubles);

C4109. The Israelites were delivered by three steps mentioned in verses 114, 115, and 116 respectively; but the consummation of Allah's favour on them was (verses 117-118) the Revelation given to them, which guided them on the Straight Way, so long as they preserved the Revelation intact and followed its precepts.

The three steps were:

1. the divine commission to Moses and Aaron:
2. the deliverance from bondage; and
3. the triumphant crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army.

وَآتَيْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ (١١٧)

117. And We gave them the Book which helps to make things clear;

C4110. Mustabin has a slightly different force from **Mubin**.

I have translated the former by "which helps to make things clear", and the latter by "which makes things clear",-apt descriptions as applied to the Tawrah and the Quran.

وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (١١٨)

118. And We guided them to the Straight Way.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١١٩)

119. And We left (this blessing) for them among generations (to come) in later times:

C4111. See above, 37:78-81 and n. 4083.

سَلَامٌ عَلَى مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (١٢٠)

120. "Peace and salutation to Moses and Aaron!"

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٢١)

121. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

إِنَّهُمَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٢٢)

122. For they were two of Our believing Servants.

وَإِنَّ إِلْيَاسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٢٣)

123. So also was Elias among those sent (by us).

C4112. See n. 905 to 6:85.

Elias is the same as Elijah, whose story will be found in the Old Testament in I Kings 17-19. and 2 Kings 1-2.

Elijah lived in the reign of Ahab (B.C. 896-874) and Ahaziah (B.C. 874-872), kings of the (northern) kingdom of Israel or Samaria. He was a prophet of the desert, like John the Baptist,-unlike our holy Prophet, who took part

in, controlled, and guided all the affairs of his people. Both Ahab and Azariah were prone to lapse into the worship of Baal, the sun-god worshipped in Syria. That worship also included the worship of nature-powers and procreative powers, as in the Hindu worship of the Lingam, and led to many abuses.

King Ahab had married a princess of Sidon, Jezebel, a wicked woman who led her husband to forsake Allah and adopt Baal-worship.

Elijah denounced all Ahab's sins as well as the sins of Ahaziah and had to flee for his life. Eventually, according to the Old Testament (4 Kings, 2:11) he was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven in a chariot of fire after he had left his mantle with Elisha the prophet. (R).

إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٢٤)

124. Behold, he said to his people,

"Will ye not fear (Allah)?

أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا...

125. "Will ye call upon Baal

C4113. For Baal-worship see last note.

وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ (١٢٥)

and forsake the Best of Creators --

وَاللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ وَرَبَّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٢٦)

126. "Allah, your Lord and Cherisher and the Lord and Cherisher of your fathers of old?"

فَكَذَّبُوهُ...

127. But they rejected him,

C4114. They persecuted him and he had to flee for his life. Eventually he disappeared mysteriously; see n. 4112.

فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (١٢٧)...

and they will certainly be called up (for punishment) --

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٢٨)

128. Except the sincere and devoted Servants of Allah (among them).

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١٢٩)

129. And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times:

C4115. See above, 37:78-81, and n. 4083.

سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِلْ يَاسِينَ (١٣٠)

130. "Peace and salutation to such as Elias!"

C4115a. Ilyasin may be an alternative form of **Ilyas**: Cf. Sainaa (23:20) and Sinin (95:2).

Or it may be the plural of **Ilyas**, meaning "such people as **Ilyas**'.

إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٣١)

131. Thus indeed do We reward those who do right.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٢)

132. For He was one of Our believing Servants.

وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٣٣)

133. So also was Lut among those sent (by us).

C4116. The best illustration of this passage about Lut will be found in 7:80-84.

He was a prophet sent to Sodom and Gomorrah, Cities of the Plain, by the Dead Sea. The inhabitants were given over to abominable crimes, against which he preached. They insulted him and threatened to expel him. But Allah in His mercy saved him and his family (with one exception, see the following note), and then destroyed the Cities.

إِذْ نَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٣٤)

134. Behold, We delivered him and his adherents, all

إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ (١٣٥)

135. Except an old woman who was among those who lagged behind:

C4117. Cf. 7:83, and n. 1051.

Lut's wife had no faith: she lagged behind, and perished in the general ruin.

ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (١٣٦)

136. Then We destroyed the rest.

وَإِنَّكُمْ لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِم مُّصْبِحِينَ (١٣٧)

137. Verily, ye pass by their (sites), by day --

C4118. Cf. 15:76, and n. 1998.

The tract where they lay is situated on the highway to Syria where the Arab caravans travelled regularly, "by day and by night". Could not future generations learn wisdom from the destruction of those who did wrong?

وَبِاللَّيْلِ...

138. And by night:

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (١٣٨)

will ye not understand?

C.199 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(37:139-182)

So was it also with Jonah; he had
His trials, but Allah had mercy on him,
And his mission was successful. How
Can men ascribe to Allah qualities
And relations derogatory to His nature?
High is He above all creatures.
The ranks of angels and messengers stand firm

In His service. Evil is sure to be overcome.
So Praise and Glory to Allah, the Lord
Of Honour and Power, and Peace to His messengers!

Section 5

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٣٩)

139. So also was Jonah among those sent (by us).

C4119. For illustrative passages, see 21:87-88, n. 2744, and 68:48-50.

Jonah's mission was to the city of Nineveh, then steeped in wickedness. He was rejected and he denounced Allah's wrath on them, but they repented and obtained Allah's forgiveness. But Jonah "departed in wrath" (21:87), forgetting that Allah has Mercy as well as forgiveness.

See the notes following i.e. n. 2744.

Cf. 10:98, n. 1478.

إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (١٤٠)

140. When he ran away (like slave from captivity) to the ship (fully) laden,

C4120. Jonah ran away from Nineveh like a slave from captivity. He should have stuck to his post. He was hasty, and went off to take a ship. As if he could escape from Allah's Plan!

فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (١٤١)

141. He (agreed to) cast lots, and he was condemned:

C4121. The ship was fully laden and met foul weather. The sailors, according to their superstition, wanted to find out who was responsible for the ill-luck: a fugitive slave would cause such ill-luck. The lot fell on Jonah, and he was cast off .

فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ...

142. Then the big Fish did swallow him,

C4122. The rivers of Mesopotamia have some huge fishes. The word used here is **Hat**, which may be a fish or perhaps a crocodile. If it were in an open northern sea, it might be a whale. The locality is not mentioned:

in the Old Testament he is said to have taken ship in the port of Joppa (now Jaffa) in the Mediterranean (Jonah, 1:3), which would be not less than 600 miles from Nineveh.

The Tigris river, mentioned by some of our Commentators, is more likely, and it contains some fishes of extraordinary size.

وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (١٤٢)...

and he had done acts worthy of blame.

C4123. See n. 4120.

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ (١٤٣)

143. Had it not been that he (repented and) glorified Allah,

C4124. "But he cried through the depths of darkness, 'There is no god but Thee: glory to Thee! I was indeed wrong!" (21:87).

لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٤٤)

144. He would certainly have remained inside the Fish till the Day of Resurrection.

C4125. This is just the idiom. This was to be the burial and the grave of Jonah. If he had not repented, he could not have got out of the body of the creature that had swallowed him, until the Day of Resurrection, when all the dead would be raised up.

فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ (١٤٥)

145. But We cast him forth on the naked shore in a state of sickness,

C4126. Cf. 37:89 above.

His strange situation might well have caused him to be ill. He wanted fresh air and solitude. He got both in the open plain, and the abundantly shady Gourd Plant or

some fruitful tree like it gave him both shade and sustenance. The Gourd is a creeper that can spread over any roof or ruined structure.

وَأَنبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّن يَقْطِينٍ (١٤٦)

146. And We caused to grow over him, a spreading plant of the Gourd kind,

وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِئَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ (١٤٧)

147. And We sent him (on a mission) to a hundred thousand (men) or more.

C4127. The city of Nineveh was a very large city. The Old Testament says: "Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey" (Jonah, 3:3); "wherein are more than six score thousand persons" (Jonah, 4:11).

In other words its circuit was about 45 miles, and its population was over a hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants.

فَآمَنُوا...

148. And they believed;

...فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَى حِينٍ (١٤٨)

so We permitted them to enjoy (their life) for a while.

C4128. They repented and believed, and Nineveh got a new lease of life. For the dates to which Jonah may be referred, and the vicissitudes of the City's history as the seat of the Assyrian Empire, see notes 1478-79

n. 1478, n.1479 to 10:98.

The lessons from Jonah's story are:

- that no man should take upon himself to judge of Allah's wrath or Allah's mercy;
- that nevertheless Allah forgives true repentance, whether in a righteous man, or in a wicked city; and
- that Allah's Plan will always prevail, and can never be defeated.

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلِرَبِّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ (١٤٩)

149. Now ask them their opinion: is it that thy Lord has (only) daughters, and they have sons? --

C4129. We begin a new argument here. The Pagan Arabs called angels daughters of Allah. They themselves were ashamed of having daughters, and preferred to have sons, to add to their power and dignity.

See 16:57-59, and n. 2082. Yet they invented daughters for Allah!

أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ (١٥٠)

150. Or that We created the angels female, and they are witnesses (thereto)?

أَلَا إِنَّهُم مِّنْ إِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ (١٥١)

151. Is it not that they say, from their own invention,

وَلَدَ اللَّهُ...

152. "Allah has begotten children"?

C4130. Any attribution to Allah of ideas derogatory to His Oneness and His supreme height above all creatures is likely to degrade our own conception of Allah's Universal plan, and is condemned in the strongest terms.

...وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٥٢)

But they are liars!

أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ (١٥٣)

153. Did He (then) choose daughters rather than sons?

C4131. There is the strongest irony in this passage.

مَا لَكُمْ...

154. What is the matter with you?

...كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (١٥٤)

How judge ye?

أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (١٥٥)

155. Will ye not then receive admonition?

أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥٦)

156. Or have ye an authority manifest?

فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابِكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٥٧)

157. Then bring ye your Book (of authority) if ye be truthful!

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا...

158. And they have invented a blood-relationship between Him and the Jinns:

C4132. The angels arc at least pure beings engaged in the service of Allah. But the Pagan superstitions not only connect them with Allah as daughters but even connect Allah by relationship with all kinds of spirits, good or evil! In some mythologies the most evil powers are gods or goddesses as if they belonged to the family of Allah the Creator and had some semblance of equality with Him! This, too, is repudiated in the strongest terms.

For Jinns see n. 929 to 6:100.

...وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (١٥٨)

but the Jinns know (quite well) that they have indeed to appear (before His judgment-seat)!

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (١٥٩)

159. Glory to Allah!

(He is free) from the things they ascribe (to Him)!

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٦٠)

160. Not (so do) the servants of Allah, sincere and devoted.

C4133. Those sincere in devotion to Allah never ascribe such degrading ideas to Allah.

فَإِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ (١٦١)

161. For, verily, neither ye nor those ye worship --

مَا أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَاتِنِينَ (١٦٢)

162. Can lead (any) into temptation concerning Allah,

C4134. Evil has no power over faith, truth, and sincerity. Such power as it has is over those who deliberately put themselves in the way of Destruction. It is their own will that leads them astray. If they were fortified against Evil by Faith, Patience, and Constancy, Evil would have no power to hurt them. Allah would protect them.

إِلَّا مَنْ هُوَ صَالِ الْجَحِيمِ (١٦٣)

163. Except such as are (themselves) going to the blazing Fire!

وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ (١٦٤)

164. (Those ranged in ranks say):

"Not one of us but has a place appointed,

C4135. To round off the argument of the Surah we go back to the idea with which it began.

Those who range themselves in ranks for the united service of Allah (see above, 37:I and n. 4031) - whether angels or men of God-are content to keep their ranks and do whatever service is assigned to them. It is not for them to question Allah's Plan, because they know that it is good and that it will ultimately triumph. Any seeming delays or defeats do not worry them. Nor do they ever break their ranks.

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ (١٦٥)

165. "And we are verily ranged in ranks (for service):

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ (١٦٦)

166. "And we are verily those who declare (Allah's) glory!"

وَإِنْ كَانُوا لَيَقُولُونَ (١٦٧)

167. And there were those who said,

C4136. There were the skeptics or Unbelievers,- primarily the Pagan Arabs, but in a more extended sense, all who doubt Allah's providence or revelation.

لَوْ أَنَّ عِندَنَا ذِكْرًا مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٦٨)

168. "If only we had had before us a message from those of old.

لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (١٦٩)

169. "We should certainly have been servants of Allah, sincere (and devoted)!"

C4137. Such men take refuge in ancestral tradition. 'If our forefathers had had an inkling of Revelation or miracles, or had worshipped as we are now taught to worship, we should gladly have accepted.

Or if they had had anything of the miracles which other nations of old are said to have received, we could then have accepted.' But now stronger and more convincing proofs have come to them in the Quran in their own tongue, and they doubt and reject it.

فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ...

170. But (now that the Qur'án has come), they reject it:

...فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٧٠)

but soon will they know!

C4138. Allah's Truth will manifest itself against all odds, and the whole world will see.

وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٧١)

171. Already has Our Word been passed before (this) to Our Servants sent (by Us),

إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمُ الْمَنصُورُونَ (١٧٢)

172. That they would certainly be assisted,

وَإِنَّ جُندَنَا لَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ (١٧٣)

173. And that Our forces -- they surely must conquer.

C4139. The victory will be the victory of Allah's Truth by the forces of Allah, but every soldier in the army of Truth, who has done his duty, will be entitled to claim a share in the victory.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (١٧٤)

174. So turn thou away from them for a little while,

C4140. Addressed in the first instance to the holy Prophet, but good for all time. He was not to be discouraged by his initial failures. Soon came victory to him from Allah. So is it always in the struggles of truth and righteousness. The righteous can afford to ignore opposition, confident in the strength which comes from the Grace of Allah.

وَأَبْصِرْهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧٥)

175. And watch them (how they fare), and they soon shall see (how thou farest)!

C4141. Watch and wait, for the Right must come to its own.

أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (١٧٦)

176. Do they wish (indeed) to hurry on Our Punishment?

C4142. The last verse enjoined Patience under the attacks of Evil, in the knowledge that evil must be conquered at last. Evil may perhaps turn back scoffingly and say, 'If a punishment is to come, why not bring it on now?'

Why indeed?

The answer is: when it comes, it will come like a rush by night when the enemy is overpowered, when he least expects it: when the day dawns, it is a sorry plight in which the enemy finds himself.

Cf. 22:47, and n. 2826; and 26:204, n. 3230.

فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (١٧٧)

177. But when it descends into the open space before them, evil will be the morning for those who were warned (and heeded not)!

C4143. See last note.

The parable is that of an enemy camp in a plain, which is surprised and destroyed by a night attack from the hills. Evil is the plight of any survivors in the morning. Their regrets will be all the more poignant if they had had some sort of a warning before hand and had paid no heed to it!

وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى حِينٍ (١٧٨)

178. So turn thou away from them for a little while,

C4144. This and the following verse repeat verses 174-175 (with a slight verbal alteration).

The argument in verses 176-177 brought in a new point. When that is finished, the repetition carries us back to the main argument, and rounds off the whole Surah.

وَأَبْصِرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ (١٧٩)

179. And watch (how they fare) and they soon shall see (how thou farest)!

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ ...

180. Glory to thy Lord, the Lord of Honor and Power!

C4145. This and the following two verses recapitulate:

- Glory, Honour, and Power belong to Allah;
- No one is equal to Him;
- He sends messengers and revelations, and His aid will overcome all obstacles;
- for He loves and cherishes all His Creation.

... عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (١٨٠)

(He is free) from what they ascribe (to Him)!

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٨١)

181. And Peace on the Messengers!

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٨٢)

182. And praise to Allah, the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds.



The Absolute Reality

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا

And We created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between them without purpose!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Saad

ص

Introduction and Summary

For the place of this Surah in the series of six, dealing with some of the mysteries of the spiritual world, see Introduction to Surah 34.

This Surah, both in chronology and subject matter, is cognate to Surah 37, and carries forward the same argument. But here the emphasis is laid on the working of earthly power when combined with spiritual power, and it is pointed out how much more significant (and real) spiritual power is. For this reason the

illustrative stories are mainly those of David and Solomon who were kings as well as prophets, and a parallel is suggested with the unfolding public life of our Holy Prophet.

Summary- Worldly and evil men are surprised at the renewal of Truth of Righteousness; but righteousness has more power than worldly strength, as is seen in the story of kings like David, who had both (38:1-26, and C. 200).

So also Solomon loved the Lord more than worldly power, which may be good but may be misused by evil men; so also Job and other men of power and insight, chose the path of final bliss rather than final misery (38:27-64, and C. 202).

So also in the case of the final Messenger; his Gospel of Unity must triumph over all Jealousy and Arrogance in God's good time (38:65-88, and C. 202).

C.200 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(38:1-26)

*Self-gl*ory and Separatism, these
Are among the rooms of Evil, also Envy
And Suspicion. Not all the combinations
Of Evil can for a moment reverse
Allah's Purpose or His Justice. David,
Endowed with worldly Power and Virtues
Had yet to purge himself of the thought
Of Self-glory, which he did; and thus
He became one of those nearest to Allah.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ص...

1. Sad:

C4146. Sad is a letter of the Arabic alphabet. It is used here as an Abbreviated Letter, for which see Appendix I (at the end of Sarah 2).

See also the second para, of n. 989 to 7:1 for this particular letter.

No dogmatism is permissible in trying to interpret Abbreviated Letters.

This Surah is concerned mainly with the stories of David and Solomon as illustrative of the relative positions of spiritual and worldly power.

Sale's note: "it may stand for Solomon": is a real howler; for in Arabic the letter **Sad** does not occur at all in the name of Solomon.

... وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ (١)

by the Qur'án, full of Admonition: (this is the Truth).

C4147. Full of admonition: the word **zikr** is far more comprehensive than any single word or phrase that I can think of in English: it implies

1. remembrance in a spirit of reverence;
2. recital, celebrating the praises of Allah;
3. teaching, admonition, warning;
4. Message, Revelation, as in **Ah-luz-zikr**, "those who possess the Message" (16:43, and n. 2069).

   Devotional exercises are also called **zikr**, with reference to meaning (2) above.

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ (٢)

2. But the Unbelievers (are steeped) in Self-glory and Separatism.

C4148. The great root of Evil and Unbelief is Self-glory or Arrogance, as is pointed out in several places with regard to Satan; cf. below, 78:74-76.

This leads to Envy and opposition or a desire to start a peculiar doctrine or sect of one's own, instead of a desire to find common grounds of belief and life, which lead to the Religion of Unity of Allah.

This teaching of Unity was what the Pagans objected to in the holy Prophet (verse 5 below)!

كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن قَرْنٍ...

3. How many generations before them did We destroy?

... فَنَادَوْا وَّلَاتَ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ (٣)

In the end they cried (for mercy) -- when there was no longer time for being saved!

C4149. Teaching, Warning, Signs have been given by Allah to all nations and at all times, and yet nations have rebelled and gone wrong and suffered destruction. If only later generations could learn that wrong-doing results in self-destruction! For the justice of Allah merely carries out the result of their own choice and actions. At any time during their probation they could repent and obtain mercy, but their "Self-glory and Separatism" stand in the way. Ultimately they do cry for a way of escape, but it is then too late.

وَعَجِبُوا أَن جَاءهُم مُّنذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ ...

4. So they wonder that a Warner has come to them from among themselves!

C4150. Their wonder is only stimulated. They are full of envy and spite against one of themselves who has been chosen by Allah to be His Messenger, and they vent their spite by making all sorts of false accusations. The man who was pre-eminent for truth and conscientious consideration, they call "a sorcerer and a liar"!

... وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ (٤)

And the Unbelievers say, "This is a sorcerer telling lies!

أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلٰهًا وَاحِدًا...

5. "Has he made the gods (all) into one Allah?

C4151. And what is the offence of the Messenger of Unity? That he has made all their fantastic gods disappear; that in place of chaos he has brought harmony; that in place of conflict he brings peace! It is a wonderful thing, but not in the sarcastic sense in which the Unbelievers scoff at it!

... إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ (٥)

Truly this is a wonderful thing!"

وَانطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنِ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَىٰ آلِهَتِكُمْ...

6. And the leaders among them go away (impatiently), (saying),

"Walk ye away, and remain constant to your gods!

C4152. When the message of Islam was being preached in its infancy, and the Preacher and his followers were being persecuted by the Pagans, one of the devices adopted by the Pagan leaders was to get the Prophet's uncle Abu Talib to denounce or renounce his beloved nephew.

A conference was held with Abu Talib for this purpose. On its failure the leaders walked away, and began to discredit the great movement by falsely giving out that it was designed against their personal influence, and to throw power into the hands of the Prophet.

Hadhrat Umar's conversion occurred in the sixth year of the Mission (seventh year before the Hijrah). The circumstances connected with it (see Introduction to Surah 20) greatly alarmed the Quraish chiefs, who, greedy of autocracy themselves, confused the issue by accusing the righteous Preacher of plotting against their power.

... إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ (٦)

For this is truly a thing designed (against you)!

مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ...

7. "We never heard (the like) of this among the people of these latter days:

C4153. 'Whatever may have been the case in the past', they said, 'our own immediate ancestors worshipped these idols in Makkah and why should we give them up?'

Self- complacency was stronger with them than Truth; and so they call Truth "a made-up tale"!

Some Commentators interpret **millat akhirat** to refer to the last religion preached before Islam, viz. Christianity, which had itself departed from Monotheism to Trinity. (R).

... إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ (٧)

this is nothing but a made-up tale!

أَأُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِن بَيْنِنَا...

8. "What! Has the Message been sent to him -- (of all persons) among us?"...

C4154. Here comes in envy. 'If a Message had to come, why should it come to him, the orphan son of 'Abdullah, and not to one of our own great men?'

... بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّن ذِكْرِي...

But they are in doubt concerning My (own) Message!

C4155. They have no clear idea of how Allah's Message comes!

It is not a worldly thing to be given to any one. It is a divine thing requiring spiritual preparation. If they close their eyes to it now, it will be brought home to them when they taste the consequences of their folly!

... بَل لَّمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابِ (٨)

Nay, they have not yet tasted My Punishment!

أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ...

9. Or have they the Treasures of the Mercy of thy Lord --

C4156. If they set themselves to judge Allah, have they anything to show comparable to Allah's Mercy and Power! He has both in infinite measure. Who are they to question the grant of His Mercy and Revelation to His own Chosen One?

... الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ (٩)

the Exalted in Power, the Grantor of Bounties without measure!

أَمْ لَهُم مُّلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

10. Or have they the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all between?

... فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ (١٠)

If so, let them mount up with the ropes and means (to reach that end)!

C4157. Weak and puny creatures though they are, they dare to raise their heads against the Omnipotent, as if they had dominion over Creation and not He! If they had any power, let them mount up to heaven and use all the means they have to that end, and see how they can frustrate Allah's Purpose!

جُندٌ مَّا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُومٌ مِّنَ الْأَحْزَابِ (١١)

11. But there -- will be put to flight even a host of confederates.

C4158. Of course they cannot frustrate Allah's Purpose. In that world-they will be ignominiously routed, even if they form the strongest confederacy of the Powers of Evil that ever could combine.

Cf. the last clause of verse 13 below.

... كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ

12. Before them (were many who) rejected messengers --

the People of Noah, and 'Ad,

C4159. In their day, Noah's contemporaries, or the 'Ad and the Thamud, so frequently mentioned, or Pharaoh the mighty king of Egypt, or the people to whom Lut was sent (cf. 37:75-82; 7:65-73; 7:103-137; 7:80-84) were

examples of arrogance and rebellion against Allah: they rejected the divine Message brought by their messengers, and they all came to an evil end. Will not their posterity learn their lesson?

... وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ (١٢)

and Pharaoh the Lord of Stakes.

C4160. The title of Pharaoh, **"Lord of the Stakes"**, denotes power and arrogance, in all or any of the following ways:

- the stake makes a tent firm and stable, and is a symbol of firmness and stability;
- many stakes mean a large camp and a numerous army to fight;
- impaling with stakes was a cruel punishment resorted to by the Pharaohs in arrogant pride of power.

... وَثَمُودُ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ

13. And Thamud, and the People of Lut, and the Companions of the Wood;

C4161. Companions of the Wood; see 15:78, and n. 2000.

... أُولَٰئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ (١٣)

such were the Confederates.

C4162. Cf. above, verse 11, and n. 4158.

إِن كُلٌّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ (١٤)

14. Not one (of them) but rejected the messengers, but My Punishment came justly and inevitably (on them).

C4163. Cf. 15:64, n. 1990; and 22:18.

Section 2

وَمَا يَنظُرُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً ...

15. These (to-day) only wait for a single mighty Blast,

C4164. Cf. 36:29, n. 3973.

... مَّا لَهَا مِن فَوَاقٍ (١٥)

which (when it comes) will brook no delay.

C4165. Fawaq: delay, the interval between one milking of a she-camel, and another, either to give her a breathing space or to give her young time to suck,-or perhaps the milker to adjust his fingers. Such interval will be quite short.

The derived meaning is that when the inevitable just punishment for sin arrives, it will not tarry, but do its work without delay.

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّل لَّنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (١٦)

16. They say:

"Our Lord! Hasten to us our sentence (even) before the Day of Account!"

C4166. Cf. 26:204 and n. 3230.

Those who do not believe in the Hereafter say ironically: "Let us have our punishment and sentence now: why delay it?"

The last verse and the next verse supply the commentary. As to those who mock, they will find out the truth soon enough, when it is too late for repentance or mercy.

As to the prophets of Allah, who are mocked, they must wait patiently for Allah to fulfil His Plan: even men who had worldly strength and power, like David had to exercise infinite patience when mocked by their contemporaries.

اصْبِرْ عَلَى مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ...

17. Have patience at what they say, and remember Our Servant David, the man of strength:

C4167. David was a man of exceptional strength, for even as a raw youth, he slew the Philistine giant Goliath. See 2:249-252, and notes 286-287.

Before that fight, he was mocked by his enemies and chidden even by his own elder brother. But he relied upon Allah, and won through, and afterwards became king.

... إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٧)

for he ever turned (to Allah).

إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ...

18. It was We that made the hills declare,

C4168. See n. 2733 to 21:79.

All nature sings in unison and celebrates the praises of Allah.

David was given the gift of music and psalmody, and therefore the hills and birds are expressed as singing Allah's praises in unison with him.

The special hours when the hills and groves echo the songs of birds are in the evening and at dawn, when also the birds gather together, for those are respectively their roosting hours and the hours of their concerted flight for the day.

... مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (١٨)

in unison with him, Our Praises, at eventide and at break of day.

وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً...

19. And the birds gathered (in assemblies):

... كُلٌّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٩)

all with him did turn (to Allah).

C4169. Note the mutual echo between this verse and verse 17 above.

The Arabic **awwab** is common to both, and it furnishes the rhyme or rhythm of the greater part of the Surah, thus echoing the main theme: 'Turn to Allah in Prayer and Praise, for that is more than any worldly power or wisdom.'

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ (٢٠)

20. We strengthened his kingdom, and gave him wisdom and sound judgment in speech and decision.

C4170. Cf. n. 2732 to 21:79 for David's sound judgment in decisions; he could also express himself aptly, as his Psalms bear witness.

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَصْمِ ...

21. Has the Story of the Disputants reached thee?

C4171. This story or Parable is not found in the Bible, unless the vision here described be considered as equivalent to Nathan's parable in 11 Samuel, 11, and 12. Baydawi would seem to favour that view, but other Commentators reject it.

David was a pious man, and he had a well-guarded private chamber (mihrab) for Prayer and Praise.

إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (٢١) ...

Behold, they climbed over the wall of the private chamber;

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُودَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ...

22. When they entered the presence of David, and he was terrified of them,

C4172. David used to retire to his private chamber at stated times for his devotions. One day, suddenly, his privacy was invaded by two men, who had obtained access by climbing over a wall. David was frightened at the apparition. But they said: "We have come to seek thy justice as king: we are brothers, and we have a quarrel, which we wish thee to decide."

... قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ...

they said: "Fear not:

... خَصْمَانِ بَغَى بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

We are two disputants, one of whom has wronged the other:

... فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ...

decide now between us with truth,

... وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ (٢٢)

and treat us not with injustice, but guide us to the even Path.

إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِيَ نَعْجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ...

23. "This man is my brother;

he has nine and ninety ewes, and I have (but) one:

C4173. The brother who was most aggrieved said: "This my brother has a flock of ninety-nine sheep, and I have but one; yet he wants me to give up my one sheep to his keeping; and moreover he is not even fair-spoken. He talks like one meditating mischief, and he has not even the grace to ask as an equal, or one sharing in a business or an inheritance. What shall I do?"

... فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ (٢٣)

Yet he says, 'Commit her to my care,' and is (moreover) harsh to me in speech."

قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعْجَتِكَ إِلَى نِعَاجِهِ...

24. (David) said:

"He has undoubtedly wronged thee in demanding thy (single) ewe to be added to his (flock of) ewes:

C4174. The circumstances were mysterious; the accusation was novel; it was not clear why the unjust brother should also have come with the complainant, risking his life in climbing the wall to evade the guard, and he certainly said nothing.

David took them literally, and began to preach about the falsehood and the fraud of men, who should be content with what they have, but who always covet more. (R).

... وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْ الْخُلَطَاء لَيَبْغِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ...

truly many are the Partners (in business) who wrong each other:

C4175. Especially, said David, is it wrong for brothers or men in partnership to take advantage of each other; but how few are the men who are righteous?

He had in his mind his own devotion and justice. But lo and behold! the men disappeared as mysteriously as they had come.

It was then that David realized that the incident had been a trial or temptation-a test of his moral or spiritual fibre! Great though he was as a king, and just though he was as a judge, the moment that he thought of these things in self-pride, his merit vanished.

In himself he was as other men: it was Allah's grace that gave him wisdom and justice, and he should have been humble in the sight of Allah.

... إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا هُمْ...

not so do those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and how few are they?"...

... وَظَنَّ دَاوُودُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ...

And David gathered that We had tried him:

... فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ ...

he asked forgiveness of his Lord,

C4176. Judged by ordinary standards, David had done no wrong; he was a good and just king.

Judged by the highest standard of those nearest to Allah (Muqarraban, 56:11), the thought of self-pride and self-righteousness had to be washed off from him by his own act of self-realisation and repentance.

This was freely accepted by Allah, as the next verse shows.

... وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ (٢٤)

fell down, bowing (in prostration), and turned (to Allah in repentance).

C4176a. Some commentators say that David's fault here was his hastiness in judging before hearing the case of the other party. When he realized his lapse, he fell down in repentance. [Eds.].

...فَغَفَرْنَا لَهُ ذَٰلِكَ

25. So We forgave him this (lapse):

... وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٢٥)

he enjoyed, indeed, a Near Approach to Us, and a beautiful place of (final) Return.

يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ...

26. O David!

We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth:

C4177. Cf. 2:30, and n. 47.

David's kingly power, and the gifts of wisdom, justice, psalmody, and prophethood were bestowed on him as a trust. These great gifts were not to be a matter of self-glory.

... فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ...

so judge thou between men in truth (and justice):

... وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of Allah:

C4178. As stated in n. 4171 above, this vision and its moral are nowhere to be found in the Bible. Those who think they see a resemblance to the Parable of the

prophet Nathan (2 Samuel, 12:1-12) have nothing to go upon but the mention of the "one ewe" here and the "one little ewe-lamb" in Nathan's Parable.

The whole story is here different, and the whole atmosphere is different. The Biblical title given to David, "a man after God's own heart" is refuted by the Bible itself in the scandalous tale of heinous crimes attributed to David in chapters 11 and 12 of 2 Samuel, viz., adultery, fraudulent dealing with one of his own servants, and the contriving of his murder. Further, in chapter 13, we have the story of rapes, incest, and fratricide in David's own household! The fact is that passages like those are mere chroniques scandaleuses, i.e., narratives of scandalous crimes of the grossest character.

The Muslim idea of David is that of a man just and upright, endowed with all the virtues, in whom even the least thought of self-elation has to be washed off by repentance and forgiveness. (R).

...إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ...

for those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty Grievous,

... بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ (٢٦)

for that they forget the Day of Account.

C.202 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(38:27-64)

For just ends was the world created.
Solomon, in the midst of his worldly power
And glory, never forgot Allah, not Job
In the midst of affliction; nor other men
Of Power and Vision, whose patience and constancy
Brought them nearer to Allah. So should

All the righteous strive to win
The final Bliss, for truly grievous
Are the woes of Evil in the final Account.

Section 3

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاء وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا...

27. Not without purpose did We create heaven and earth and all between!

C4179. Cf. 3:191.

Unbelief is the subjective negation of a belief in Order, Beauty, Purpose, and Eternal Life. Unbelief is to Faith as Chaos is to Cosmos, as the Fire of Misery is to the Garden of Bliss.

... ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

That were the thought of Unbelievers!

... فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ (٢٧)

But woe to the Unbelievers because of the Fire (of Hell)!

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

28. Shall We treat those who believe and work **deeds** of righteousness, the same as those who do mischief on earth?

C4180. The reference to the Hereafter at the end of verse 26 above is of a piece with the whole tenor of this Surah, which deals with the superiority of the spiritual kingdom and the Hereafter.

If there were no Hereafter, how could you reconcile the inequalities of this world?

Would not the Unbelievers be right in acting as if all Creation and all life were futile?

But there is a Hereafter and Allah will not treat the Good and Evil alike. He is just and will fully restore the balance disturbed in this life.

... أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ (٢٨)

Shall We treat those who guard against evil, the same as those who turn aside from the right?

كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ...

29. (Here is) a Book which We have sent down unto thee, full of blessings,

C4181. Revelation is not a mere chance or haphazard thing. It is a real blessing-among the greatest that Allah has bestowed on man.

... لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ ...

that they may meditate on its Signs,

By meditation on it in an earnest spirit man may learn of himself, and his relation to nature around him and to Allah the Author of all.

... وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٢٩)

and that men of understanding may receive admonition.

Men of understanding may, by its help, resolve all genuine doubts that there may be in their minds, and learn the true lessons of spiritual life.

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُودَ سُلَيْمَانَ...

30. To David We gave Solomon (for a son) --

C4182. The greatest in this life have yet need of this spiritual blessing! without it all worldly good is futile.

Referring back to the story of David, we are now introduced to Solomon, who was a great king but greater still because he served Allah and turned to Him.

The Quran, unlike the old Testament, represents Solomon as a righteous king, not as an idolater, doing "evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings. 11:6).

... نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ...

how excellent in Our service!

... إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٣٠)

Ever did he turn (to Us)!

... إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ

31. Behold, there were brought before him, at eventide,

C4183. The passages about David and Solomon have been variously interpreted by the Commentators. The versions which I have suggested have good authority behind them, though I have followed my own judgment in filling in the details.

... الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ (٣١)

coursers of the highest breeding; and swift of foot;

C4184. Safinat: literally, horses that stand, when at ease, on three legs, firmly planted, with the hoof of the fourth leg resting lightly on the ground.

This would imply breeding and a steady temper, to match with their quality of swiftness mentioned in the next clause.

فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّي...

32. And he said, "Truly do I love the love of Good, with a view to the glory of my Lord,"

C4185. The story is not found in the Old Testament.

I interpret it to mean that, like his father David, Solomon was also most meticulous in not allowing the least motive of self to be mixed up with his spiritual virtues. He was fond of horses; he had great armies and wealth; but he used them all in Allah's service. Cf. 27:19. n. 3259; 27:40. n. 3276, etc.

His battles were not fought for lust of blood, but as Jihad in the cause of righteousness. His love of horses was not like that of a mere race-goer or of a warrior: there was a spiritual element in it. He loved by a kind of love which was spiritual,-the love of the highest Good.

Some commentators interpret this verse saying that Solomon, peace be upon him, was so engrossed in the

inspection of his fine horses that he completely forgot to say his 'Asr prayer before the sunset'.

In the light of this interpretation the verse may be translated:

"And he said, Truly did I prefer the good things (of this world) to the remembrance of my Lord". (R).

... حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ (٣٢)

until (the sun) was hidden in the veil (of Night):

C4186. His review of his fine horses was interrupted by his evening devotions, but he resumed it after his devotions.

... رُدُّوهَا عَلَيَّ

33. "Bring them back to me."

... فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ (٣٣)

Then began he to pass his hand over (their) legs and their necks.

In the light of the alternative interpretation this verse would mean that upon missing 'Asr prayer, Solomon, peace be upon him, was so upset and sorry that he asked for the horses to be brought back to him and then "he fell to slashing with his sword their legs and necks", that is, he slaughtered them in expiation of his lapse seeking the forgiveness and pleasure of Allah. (R).

... وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ

34. And We did try Solomon:

C4188. What was the trial of Solomon?

All the power, wealth, and glory, which were given to him were a spiritual trial to him. They might have turned another man's head, but he was staunch and true, and while he enjoyed and used all the power he had-over the jinns, men, and the forces of nature, (see below), he kept his mind steady to the service of Allah.

Cf. 8:28, where "your possessions and your progeny" are declared to be "but a trial".

... وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا...

We placed on his throne a body (without life):

C4189. *The body (without life) on his throne* has been variously interpreted.

The interpretation that appeals to me most is that his earthly power, great as it was, was like a body without a soul, unless it was vivified by Allah's spirit. But Solomon did turn to Allah in true devotion, and his real power lay there. He did his best to root out idolatry, and he completed the Temple in Jerusalem for the worship of the One True God.

Cf. his conversion of Bilqis the Queen of Sheba, 27:40. n. 3276.

See also 7:148, where the same word **jasad** is used in connection with the image of a calf which the Israelites had set up the worship in the absence of Moses. Men may worship worldly Power as they may worship an idol, and there is great temptation in such Power, through Solomon withstood such temptation.

I do not think that a reference to 34:14 (n. 3808) will fit the context here. (R).

... ثُمَّ أَنَابَ (٣٤)

but he did turn (to Us in true devotion):

... قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي

35. He said,

"O my Lord! Forgive me,

C4190. The seeking of worldly Power, even if intended to be used for Allah's service, has a little of Self in it. It may be quite legitimate and even meritorious in ordinary men, but even the thought of it in a Prophet is to be apologized for.

See a similar idea in the case of David explained in n. 4176 to 38:24 above.

... وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَّا يَنبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي...

and grant me a Kingdom, which, (it may be), suits not another after me:

C4191. He asked for a Power that he would not misuse, though others might not be able to refrain from misusing it,-such as power over forces of nature or forces of violence (see the next three verses).

... إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٣٥)

for Thou art the Grantor of Bounties (without measure)."

C4192. Cf. 38:9 above.

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ...

36. Then We subjected the Wind to his power,

C4193. Cf. 21:81, and n. 2736.

... تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاء حَيْثُ أَصَابَ (٣٦)

to flow gently to his order, whithersoever he willed --

وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّاء وَغَوَّاصٍ (٣٧)

37. As also the evil ones, (including) every kind of builder and diver --

C4194. Cf. 21:82, and n. 2738.

Cf. also 34:12-13 and notes there:

in the latter passage the spirits mentioned are called Jinns. The divers were probably those employed in pearl-fisheries,

وَآخَرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ (٣٨)

38. As also others bound together in fetters.

C4195. Cf. 14:49, where the same expression **"bound together in fetters"** is applied to Sinners on the Day of Judgment.

هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا...

39. "Such are Our Bounties:

... فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٩)

whether thou bestow them (on others) or withhold them, no account will be asked."

C4196. Allah bestowed such abundant powers and bounties on Solomon that they could not be counted or measured: and he was free to give away anything he liked or keep anything he liked.

In this was great temptation for an ordinary man. Solomon as a prophet withstood it and asked to be forgiven for power and such a kingdom as others might not be able to use lawfully.

His earthly kingdom went to pieces after his death. But his name and fame endure. And what is more, he obtained a place among the Nearest Ones to Allah.

See next verse.

وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَى وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٤٠)

40. And he enjoyed, indeed, a Near Approach to Us, and a beautiful Place of (final) Return.

C4197. The same words are used of David in 38:25 above, thus symmetrically closing the argument about the two greatest kings in Israel.

Section 4

وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ...

41. Commemorate Our servant Job,

C4198. For this passage, verses 41-44, Cf. 21:83-84.

... إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ (٤١)

behold he cried to his Lord: "The Evil One has afflicted me with distress and suffering"!

C4199. The distress was of many kinds. See n. 2739 to 21:83.

He suffered from loathsome sores; he lost his home, his possessions, and his family; and almost his balance of mind. But he did not lose Faith but turned to Allah (see verse 44 below), and the recuperative process began.

ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ...

42. (The command was given:) "Strike with thy foot:

C4200. The recuperative process having begun, he was commanded to strike the earth or a rock with his foot, and a fountain or fountains gushed forth,-to give him a bath and clean his body; to refresh his spirits; and to give him drink and rest.

This is a fresh touch, not mentioned in Surah 21. or in the Book of Job, but adding beautifully to our realisation of the picture.

... هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ (٤٢)

here is (water) wherein to wash, cool and refreshing, and (water) to drink."

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا...

43. And We gave him (back) his people, and doubled their number -- as a Grace from Ourselves,

C4201. Cf. 21:84, and notes n. 2739 - 2740.

... وَذِكْرَى لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٤٣)

and a thing for commemoration, for all who have Understanding.

وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا...

44. "And take in thy hand a little grass,

... فَاضْرِب بِّهِ وَلَا تَحْنَثْ...

and strike therewith: and break not (thy oath)."

C4202. In his worst distress Job was patient and constant in faith, but apparently his wife was not. According to the Book of Job (2:9-10),

> "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. But he said

unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

He must have said in his haste to the woman that he would beat her: he is asked now to correct her with only a wisp of grass, to show that he was gentle and humble as well as patient and constant.

... إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ...

Truly We found him full of patience and constancy:

how excellent in Our service!

C4203. Cf. 38:30 above, where similar words are spoken of Solomon. Patience and constancy are also a form of service, if our attitude is due to an active faith in Allah, and not mere passivity.

So Milton in his Sonnet: "They also serve who only stand and wait. "

... إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٤٤)

Ever did he turn (to Us)!

وَاذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ...

45. And commemorate Our servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

... أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ (٤٥)

possessors of Power and Vision.

C4204. In the last Surah (37:83-113). Abraham and Isaac (and by implication Jacob) were mentioned as resisting Evil and winning through.

Here they are mentioned as men with spiritual power and vision. Israelite patriarchs, who bore witness to the Gospel of the Hereafter, and were therefore a blessing to their people, for they taught the Truth.

إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُم بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (٤٦)

46. Verily We did chose them for a special (purpose) --
proclaiming the Message of the Hereafter.

وَإِنَّهُمْ عِندَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٧)

47. They were, in Our sight, truly, of the company of the Elect and the Good.

وَاذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ...

48. And commemorate Isma'il, Elisha, and Dhu al Kifl:

C4205. Ismail, the Patriarch of the Arab race, was also mentioned (37:101-107) as a pattern of self-sacrifice;

now he is mentioned in the company of the Good, i.e., of those who were a blessing to their people. Here he is bracketed with Elisha (for whom see n. 906 to 6:86), and Dhu al Kifl (for whom see n. 2743 to 21:85).

All these three were examples of constancy and patience under suffering.

... وَكُلٌّ مِّنْ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٨)

each of them was of the company of the Good.

هَذَا ذِكْرٌ...

49. This is a Message (of admonition):

... وَإِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ لَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٤٩)

and verily, for the Righteous, is a beautiful place of (final) Return. --

C4206. Some of the preeminent examples of the Elect and the Good having been mentioned, we have now a reference to the Righteous as a body (rank and file as well as leaders) and their future in the Hereafter as won by victory over Evil.

جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ مُّفَتَّحَةً لَّهُمُ الْأَبْوَابُ (٥٠)

50. Gardens of Eternity, whose doors will (ever) be open to them;

C4207. The Final Bliss will not be a hole-and-comer thing, a pale reflection of some Palace or Retreat, where mystery reigns behind closed doors. Its doors will be open, and its inmates will be free to go in and out as they will, because their wins will be purified and brought into accord with the Universal Law.

مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ (٥١)

51. Therein will they recline (at ease);

therein can they call (at pleasure) for fruit in abundance, and (delicious) drink;

C4208. See n. 4003 to 36:57.

- the free Gardens are types of satisfaction in external surroundings;
- the comfortable reclining thrones, the fruit and the drink are types of the soul's individual satisfaction;
- and the society of pure-minded companions of equal ages, in the type of a soul's social satisfaction.

وَعِندَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ ...

52. And beside them will be chaste women restraining their glances,

C4209. Cf. 37:48 and n. 4064, and 36:56, n. 4002.

As we conceive happiness in this life, it is not complete if it is only solitary. How we hanker after some one who can share in our highest joy! That feeling is also figured here.

... أَتْرَابٌ (٥٢)

(companions) of equal age.

C4210. To make the social happiness complete, we want companionship of equal age. Age and youth cannot be happy together.

It is not suggested that in the Timeless state figured here, there will be old age; but if it is possible to conceive of temperamental differences then, the

company will be so arranged that it will be congenial. Or we can accept the type of youth and freshness as common to all in that happy state.

هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٥٣)

53. Such is the promise made to you for the Day of Account!

إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِن نَّفَادٍ (٥٤)

54. Truly such will be Our Bounty (to you);
it will never fail --

هَذَا...

55. Yea, such!

... وَإِنَّ لِلطَّاغِينَ لَشَرَّ مَآبٍ (٥٥)

But -- for the wrongdoers will be an evil place of (final) Return!

C4211. This is in parallel contrast to the state of the Blessed in 38:49 above.

جَهَنَّمَ...

56. Hell! --

... يَصْلَوْنَهَا...

they will burn therein --

... فَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (٥٦)

an evil bed (indeed, to lie on)! --

C4212. Cf. 14:29.

This continues the parallel contrast to the state of the Blessed already described.

هَذَا...

57. Yea, such! --

... فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَغَسَّاقٌ (٥٧)

then shall they taste it -- a boiling fluid, and a fluid dark, murky, intensely cold! --

C4213. Cf. 10:4, and n. 1390.

The conjunction of the boiling fluid with the dark, murky, intensely cold fluid heightens the effect of the Penalty.

In place of harmony, there is the discord of extreme opposites. And the discord is not confined to this: it runs through the whole idea of Hell.

See the next verse.

وَآخَرُ مِن شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ (٥٨)

58. And other Penalties of a similar kind, to match them!

هَذَا فَوْجٌ مُّقْتَحِمٌ مَّعَكُمْ...

59. Here is a troop rushing headlong with you!

C4214. The wonder is that so many people should embrace Evil, and in so much hurry and eagerness! Here they may be welcomed by the leaders of Evil, but in the final state it will be the opposite of welcome. They will be followed with reproaches and curses.

... ... لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ...

No welcome for them!

... إِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ (٥٩)

Truly, they shall burn in the Fire!

قَالُوا بَلْ أَنتُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ...

60. (The followers shall cry to the misleaders:)

"Nay, ye (too)!

No welcome for you!

... ... أَنتُمْ قَدَّمْتُمُوهُ لَنَا ...

It is ye who have brought this upon us!

C4215. It is the nature of Evil to shift the blame on to others. The followers will reproach the leaders, but none can escape personal responsibility for his own acts and deeds!

فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ (٦٠) ...

Now evil is (this) place to stay in!"

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا مَن قَدَّمَ لَنَا هَذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ (٦١)

61. They will say:

"Our Lord! Whoever brought this upon us, add to him a double Penalty in the fire!"

C4216. Cf. 7:38, and n. 1019. See also 11:20.

The evil ones now vent their spite on others. Here they ask for a double penalty for their misleaders, but they forget their own personal responsibility.

In the next verse, they express their surprise that others have escaped the torments, which they themselves have earned!

وَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرَى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُم مِّنَ الْأَشْرَارِ (٦٢)

62. And they will say:

"What has happened to us that we see not men whom we used to number among the bad ones?

C4217. The bad ones: i.e., the ones whom they (evil ones) ridiculed as fools sure to come to an evil end, because they refused to join in with the evil ones in their plots. The values are now reversed.

The good ones are among the Blessed, and are not to be seen in the "Bed of Misery". The ridicule is now against the evil ones.

أَتَّخَذْنَاهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا أَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمُ الْأَبْصَارُ (٦٣)

63. "Did we treat them (as such) in ridicule or have (our) eyes failed to perceive them?"

إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ (٦٤)

64. Truly that is just and fitting, the mutual recriminations of the People of the Fire!

C4218. The mutual recriminations and spite are themselves a part of the Penalty, for such feelings increase their unhappiness.

C.203 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(38:65-88)

The Gospel of Unity is the true cure
For Evil: for it gives the good news
Of Allah's Power Supreme, and His Mercy
And Forgiveness again and again. It warns
Us to avoid Evil, for Evil arose
From selfish Pride and Rebellion. No power
Has it over Allah's servants, sincere
And true: while Revelation comes
As a gift free to all Allah's Creation.

Section 5

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ...

65. Say: "Truly am I a Warner:

... وَمَا مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٦٥)

no god is there but the One Allah,
Supreme and Irresistible --

C4219. Cf. 12:39, where Joseph preaches to the men in prison.

The one supreme Message of importance to mankind was (and is) the Unity of Allah:

- that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all:
- that His Will is supreme;
- that He can carry out His Will without question, and no powers of Evil can defeat it;
- and that He forgives by His grace again and again.

This Message the holy Prophet came to deliver, and he delivered it.

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

66. "The Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all between --

... الْعَزِيزُ ...

Exalted in Might, Able to enforce His will,

C4220. In n. 2818 to 22:40, 1 have explained the full import of 'Aziz as a title applied to Allah, and I have expressed two of the leading ideas involved, in the two lines here.

he argument in this Surah turns upon the contrast between earthly Power and the Divine Power: the one is impotent and the other is supreme.

... الْغَفَّارُ (٦٦)

forgiving again and again."

C4221. Gaffar is the emphatic intensive form, and I have accordingly translated it as "forgiving again and again".

Cf. 20:82.

قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٧)

67. Say: "That is a Message supreme (above all) --

أَنتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ (٦٨)

68. "From which ye do turn away!

C4222. The Message which is of supreme import to mankind,-from that they turn away. Instead of profiting by it, they turn away to side issues, or unprofitable speculation: such as: what is the origin of Evil; when will Judgment come? etc.

مَا كَانَ لِيَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَى إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٦٩)

69. "No knowledge have I of the Chiefs on high, when they discuss (matters) among themselves.

C4223. The hierarchy of angels in Heaven, discuss questions of high import in the Universe. Those are not

necessarily revealed to men, except in so far as it is good for men to know, as in verses 71-85 below.

But the chief thing for man is to know that Allah is Most Merciful, that He forgives again and again, and that Evil has no power over those who trust in Allah.

إِن يُوحَى إِلَيَّ إِلَّا أَنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٠)

70. "Only this has been revealed to me: that I am to give warning plainly and publicly."

C4224. Two things are implied in **Mubin:**

1. that the warning should be clear and perspicuous;

   there should be no mincing of matters, no ambiguity, no compromise with evil, 7:184;

2. that the warning should be delivered publicly, before all people, in spite of opposition and persecution, 26:115.

Both these ideas I have tried to express in this passage.

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ ...

71. Behold, thy Lord said to the angels:

C4225. Two passages may be compared with this: viz.:

1. 2:30-39, where merely the first stages of the Rebellion against Allah and its consequences to mankind are mentioned, and
2. 15:29-40, where the further intrusion of evil in man's life here below is referred to, and an assurance is given that Evil will have no power except over those who yield to it.

The latter is the passage most relevant here, as we are now dealing with the spiritual power of Revelation to defeat the machinations of Evil.

إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِن طِينٍ (٧١) ...

"I am about to create man from clay:

C4226. This shows that the material world round us was created by Allah before Allah fashioned man and breathed of His soul into him. Geology also shows that man came on the scene at a very late stage in the history of this planet.

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ (٧٢)

72. "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of **My spirit**, fall ye down in obeisance unto him."

C4227. See n. 1968 to 15:29, where the spiritual significance of this is explained.

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ (٧٣)

73. So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them together;

إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ...

74. Not so Iblis:

... اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنْ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤)

he was haughty, and became one of those who reject Faith.

C4228. Arrogance (self-love) is thus the root of Evil and of Unfaith.

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَن تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ...

75. (Allah) said:

"O Iblis! what prevents thee from prostrating thyself to one whom I have created with My hands?

C4229. Man, as typified by Adam, is in himself nothing but frail clay. But as fashioned by Allah's creative power into something with Allah's spirit breathed into him, his dignity is raised above that of the highest creatures.

... أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ (٧٥)

Art thou haughty?

Or art thou one of the high (and mighty) ones?"

C4230. If, then, Satan refuses, it is a rebellion against Allah. It arises from arrogance or haughtiness, an exaggerated idea of Self.

Or, it is asked, are you really sufficiently high in rank to dispute with the Almighty?

Of course he was not.

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ...

76. (Iblis) said:

"I am better than he:

... خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ (٧٦)

Thou createdst me from fire, and him Thou createdst from clay."

قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ (٧٧)

77. (Allah) said:

"Then get thee out from here: for thou art rejected, accursed.

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٧٨)

78. "And My Curse shall be on thee till the Day of Judgement."

C4231. See n. 1972 to 15:35, where it is explained why the respite is to the Day of Judgment. The whole of that passage in Surah 15 forms a good commentary on this.

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (٧٩)

79. (Iblis) said: "O my Lord! give me then **respite** till the Day the (dead) are raised."

C4232. For the significance of the **respite** see n. 1973 to 15:36.

قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ (٨٠)

80. (Allah) said:

"Respite then is granted thee --

إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (٨١)

81. "Till the day of the Time Appointed."

C4233. It is not an indefinite respite. It is for a period definitely limited, while this our Probation lasts in this world. It is part of the test as to how we use our limited free-will.

After that, our whole existence will be on a different plane. The good will have been sorted out, the chain of consequences of the present world will be broken, and "a new Creation" will have taken the place of the present World.

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ ...

82. (Iblis) said:

"Then, by Thy power,

C4234. This phrase, this oath of Satan, is a fresh point introduced in this passage, because here we are dealing with Power,

- the Power of Good contrasted with Evil,
- the Power of Allah as contrasted with the power that we see in our earthly affairs.

Satan acknowledges that even his Power, such as it is, has no reality except in so far as it is permitted to operate by Allah in Allah's wise and universal Plan, and that it cannot harm the true and sincere worshippers of Allah.

لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٢) ...

I will put them all in the wrong --

C4235. See n. 1974 to 15:39.

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٨٣)

83. "Except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy grace)."

قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقَّ أَقُولُ (٨٤)

84. (Allah) said:

"Then it is just and fitting -- and I say what is just and fitting --

C4236. Cf. n. 1990 to 15:64.

لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنكَ وَمِمَّن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٥)

85. "That I will certainly fill Hell with thee and those that follow thee -- every one."

C4237. Cf. 7:18; 7:179; and 11:119, n. 1623.

The punishment of defiance, disobedience, and rebellion is inevitable and just, and the followers who chose to identify themselves with the disobedience must suffer as well as the leaders.

Cf. 10:33.

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

86. Say:

"No reward do I ask of you for this (Qur'án),

C4238. Cf. 25:57; 26:109; and many other passages.

The prophet of Allah neither seeks nor expects any reward from men. On the contrary he suffers much at their hands. He is unselfish and offers his services under Allah's inspiration. He is satisfied with the hope "that each one who will may take a straight Path to his Lord." That is his reward.

And the reward he hopes for from Allah is similarly unselfish. He earnestly hopes to win His Good Pleasure i.e. "to see His Face."

... وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ (٨٦)

nor am I a pretender.

C4239. Mutakallif.-

- a man who pretends to things that are not true,
- or declares as facts things that do not exist,
- one who takes upon himself tasks to which he is not equal.

True prophets are not people of that kind.

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧)

87. "This is no less than a Message to (all) the Worlds.

C4240. So far from there being any false or selfish motive in the Message proclaimed in Revelation, it is a healing mercy to all mankind. More, it is in accord with all parts of Allah's Creation, and makes us kin with all Creation, the handiwork of the One True God.

وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ (٨٨)

88. "And ye shall certainly know the truth of it (all) after a while."

C4241. There may be many things which we in our "muddy vesture of decay" may not fully understand or take in. If we only follow the right Path, we shall arrive at the Goal in the Hereafter, and then everything will be dear to us.



لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا

Despair not of the Mercy of Allâh, verily Allâh forgives all sins.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Zumar

الزُّمَر

Introduction and Summary

This is the last of the series of Six Surahs beginning with Surah 34, which deals with the mysteries of the spiritual world, as leading up to the Maad, or Hereafter. See Introduction to Surah 34 .

Its subject matter is how Creation in its great variety is yet sorted out in Groups or Classes, all governed by one Plan, and created and sustained by One God, Who will separate Good from Evil at the last day. The word *zumar* occurs in verses 71 and 73.

Its chronology has no significance. It belongs to the later Makkan period.

Summary- The variety in Creation yet points to the unity of Plan; there is only One God; to Him is due all worship and from Him flow all Justice and Grace (39:1-21, and C. 203)

There is unity in Revelation, and guidance come from Allah alone; turn to Him only, for all else is false (39;22-52, C. 205). God's Mercy is all-embracing: despair not; seek it before it is too late: foe Judgement and Justice will come for certain (39:53-75, C. 205).

C.203 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(39:1-21)

To Allah is due sincere devotion, and to Him
Alone; there is none like unto Him.
All nature obeys His laws, and our own
Growth and life proclaim Him Lord
And Cherisher. How can we blaspheme?
We must serve Him, the One, the true,
With sincere devotion, and follow His Law
In its highest meaning; or else the loss
In our own. All nature proclaims
Aloud His Grace and Loving-kindness.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَنزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١)

1. The revelation of this Book is from Allah, the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

C4242. In connection with Revelation two qualities of Allah are mentioned:

1. that He is All-Powerful and can carry out His Will in spite of all opposition; and
2. that He is full of knowledge and wisdom.
    - The first answers those who question how Allah can send Revelation to man;
    - the second explains that true wisdom consists in carrying out Allah's Will as revealed to us.

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ...

2. Verily it is We Who have revealed the Book to thee in Truth:

... فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّينَ (٢)

so serve Allah, offering Him sincere devotion.

أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ...

3. Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due?

C4243. In the many Signs in Creation as described below, there yet is a clear indication of the unity of Plan, pointing to the Unity of the Creator. Worship or service is due to none but Him. And He wants exclusive and sincere devotion.

... وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاء...

But those who take for protectors other than Allah (say):

... مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَى...

"We only serve them in order that they may bring us nearer to Allah."

C4244. Worshippers of Idols or of deities other than Allah, e.g., saints or perhaps Wealth and Power, Science or Selfish Desire, may pretend that these are symbols that may get them nearer to their self-development, nearer to the goal of their life, nearer to Allah, but they are altogether on the wrong track.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ...

Truly Allah will judge between them in that wherein they differ.

C4245. This departure of theirs from true worship, this divergence from the right way, produces endless disputations and sects. Allah will judge between them. But if they are determined to go after falsehoods and forget the gratitude and service which they owe to Allah, and Allah alone, they are putting themselves on a Path where they will get no guidance. They are cutting themselves off from revealed Truth.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ (٣)

But Allah guides not such as are false and ungrateful.

لَوْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَّاصْطَفَى مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاء...

4. Had Allah wished to take to Himself a son, He could have chosen whom He pleased out of those whom He doth create:

C4246. It is blasphemy to say that Allah begot a son. If that were true, He should have had a wife (6:101), and His son would have been of the same kind as Himself; whereas Allah is one, with no one else like unto Him (112:4).

Begetting is an animal act which goes with sex. How can it be consistent with our conception of One Who is above all Creatures? If such a blasphemous thought were possible, as that Allah wanted some one else to help Him, He could have chosen the best of His creatures instead of lowering Himself to an animal act.

But glory to Allah! He is above such things! His Unity is the first thing that we have to learn about Him. As He is Omnipotent, He requires no creatures to help Him or bring other creatures to Him.

... سُبْحَانَهُ...

but Glory be to Him! (He is above such things.)

... هُوَ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٤)

He is Allah, the One, the Irresistible.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ...

5. He created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions):

C4247. Cf. 6:73, and n. 896.

يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ...

He makes the Night overlap the Day, and the Day overlap the Night:

... وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ...

He has subjected the sun and the moon (to His law)

... كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى...

each one follows a course for a time appointed.

... أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٥)

Is not He the Exalted in Power -- He Who forgives again and again?

C4248. His Power is equaled by His Mercy. Who can there be like unto Him?

خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ...

6. He created you (all) from a single person:

C4249. Cf. 4:1, and n. 504.

... ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا...

then created, of like nature, his mate;

وَأَنزَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ...

and He sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs:

C4250. See 6:143-4, where four kinds of cattle are mentioned in pairs in connection with certain Arab superstitions which are there condemned.

Here the, same four kinds are mentioned as representative of domesticated cattle given by Allah as useful to man. These are;

- sheep,
- goats,
- camels, and
- oxen,

In Arab idiom the horse is not included among "cattle".

For the wisdom and goodness of Allah in granting man dominion over cattle, see 36:71-73.

يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِن بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ...

He makes you, in the wombs of your mothers, in stages, one after another,

C4251. See 22:5, where the gradual physical growth of man in several successive stages is mentioned as one of the Signs of Allah's creative Power and cherishing care.

in three veils of darkness.

C4252. The three veils of darkness which cover the unborn child are:

- the caul or membrane,
- the womb, and
- the hollow in which the womb is enclosed.

But we might understand "three" in a cumulative rather than a numerical sense.

... ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ...

Such is Allah, your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs (all) dominion.

... لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

There is no god but He:

... فَأَنَّىٰ تُصْرَفُونَ (٦)

then how are ye turned away (from your true Center)?

C4253. It is clear that you owe your very existence and your maintenance, growth, and preservation, to Allah; How is it that you are turned away by chance things from Him? (R).

إِن تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنكُمْ...

7. It ye reject (Allah), truly Allah has no need of you;

... وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ...

but He liketh not ingratitude from His servants:

C4254. Allah is independent of all wants, and therefore man's ingratitude does not affect Allah. But Allah cares for man, and therefore man's gratitude and service earn Allah's Good Pleasure, and man's ingratitude and rebellion are displeasing to Allah.

... وَإِن تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ...

if ye are grateful, He is pleased with you.

... وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ...

No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.

C4255. Cf. 6:164.

The account is between you and Allah. No one else can take your burdens or carry your sins. Vicarious atonement would be unjust.

... ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ...

In the end, to your Lord is your return, when He will tell you the truth of all that ye did (in this life).

You have to return to Allah in the Hereafter. You will find that He knows all that you did in this life, and its full significance. He will explain to you even better than you can understand yourself; because all your secret hidden motives, which you sometimes tried to ignore yourself, are fully known to Him.

... إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٧)

For He knoweth well all that is in (men's) hearts.

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ...

8. When some trouble toucheth man, he crieth unto his Lord, turning to Him in repentance:

C4256. Cf. 10:12.

Trouble and adversity often bring a man to his bearings. But if he is not firm and constant, he forgets the lessons which life is meant to teach him. As soon as he gets a little prosperity, he forgets that it is from Allah, and attributes it to something which may only be a secondary cause, e.g., his own efforts or the Powers of Nature, or something which he has invented and made into a god, e.g., idols or fate.

Allah is the Ultimate Cause of all things. To set up rivals to him in this way is not only wrong and degrading to the false worshipper himself, but misleads countless ignorant people, who may not be able to make allowances for the figures of speech or the symbolism by which subtler minds can explain away falsehoods.

... ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ مِن قَبْلُ...

but when He bestoweth a favor upon him as from Himself, (man) doth forget what he cried and prayed for before,

... وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا لِّيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ...

and he doth set up rivals unto Allah, thus misleading others from Allah's Path.

... قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا...

Say "Enjoy thy blasphemy for a little while:

C4257. Those who practice and those who teach evil and blasphemy may seen to flourish in this world. But their satisfaction will be of very short duration. They are treading all the while the Path that leads to the Fire of Perdition.

... إِنَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ (٨)

verily thou art (one) of the Companions of the Fire!"

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاء اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا...

9. Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration),

C4258. Cf. 3:113-117.

It is a great thing when a man gets into the attitude of humble devotion to Allah. To him the hereafter is a real thing, and he prepares for it with good works. He does not build his hopes on the vanities of this world, but on Allah's Grace and Mercy. Such a man is "endued with understanding" and receives Allah's Message with fervour and alacrity. He is not to be compared with the cynic or the unbeliever, who knows nothing of the real value of the inner life.

يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ...

who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord -- (like one who does not)?

... قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ...

Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?

... إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٩)

It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition."

C4259. Cf. 3:19.

Section 2

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ...

10. Say:

"O ye my servants who believe!

Fear your Lord:

C4260. The **"fear of Allah" (Taqwa)** is explained in n. 26 to 2:2.

See also n. 2912 to 23:60.

The fear of Allah is akin to love, for it means that we are afraid to displease Him.

... لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ...

good is (the reward) for those who do good in this world.

... وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةٌ...

Spacious is Allah's earth!

C4261. Cf. 29:56 and n. 3489.

We must always do right. We cannot plead that the circumstances in which we find ourselves force our hands. If our home conditions do not allow us to act according to the Faith that is in us, we must be prepared to suffer ostracism or even exile.

... إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (١٠)

Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!"

قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّينَ (١١)

11. Say:

"Verily, I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion;

وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٢)

12. "And I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah in Islam."

C4262. Cf. 6:14.

"The first" need not necessarily be chronological: it may also refer to the first rank in zeal, and in readiness to suffer for the Cause.

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٣)

13. Say: "I would, if I disobeyed my Lord, indeed have fear of the Penalty of a Mighty Day."

C4263. Cf. 6:15.

The worst penalty in a spiritual sense is the Displeasure of Allah, just as the highest achievement, the fulfilment of all desire, is the attainment of Allah's Good Pleasure: 6:16.

قُلِ اللَّهَ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ دِينِي (١٤)

14. Say: "It is Allah I serve, with my sincere (and exclusive) devotion:

فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُم مِّن دُونِهِ...

15. "Serve ye what ye will besides Him."

C4264. This is not a command or permission but a reproach and warning. The address of the Prophet of Allah may be paraphrased thus:

> 'Whatever happens I will follow the command of Allah. He has revealed Himself, and I know that He is One, supreme over all creatures. Him alone will I serve. Is there any so ignorant as to seek anyone else? Let him do so and see the result. The loss will be his own. For he falls from Grace into Evil.' (R).

... قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

Say:

"Truly, those in loss are those who lose their own souls and their People on the Day of Judgement:

C4265. The cult of Evil results in the destruction of all that is best and most valuable in us, as well as poisons all the affections which link us to our families, friends, and people, in the Final Adjustment, which we call the Day of Judgment.

... أَلَا ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ (١٥)

Ah! that is indeed the (real and) evident Loss!"

لَهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِن تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ...

16. They shall have layers of fire above them, and layers (of fire) below them:

C4266. The consequences of Sin when Judgment comes are aptly figured by Layers upon Layers of Fire, which hem in the sinners above and below.

It is also suggested that the Layers, though of Fire, have something dark in them-the scorching quality of Sin.

... ذَٰلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللَّهُ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ...

with this doth Allah warn off His servants:

C4267. But Allah does not leave mankind without warning. Man has been granted a limited amount of free-will, and in order to help him in its right use, all the consequences of his action are clearly explained to him.

To those who will listen to Reason are given arguments which can be apprehended by their own intelligence; to those who are swayed by affections and emotion, an appeal is made in the name of the love of Allah; to those who understand nothing but fear, the warning is conveyed by a portrayal of the dreadful consequences of wrong-doing.

... يَا عِبَادِ فَاتَّقُونِ (١٦)

"O My servants! Then fear ye Me!"

...وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَن يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى

17. Those who eschew Evil -- and fall not into its worship -- and turn to Allah (in repentance) -- for them is Good News:

C4268. There is always the danger that Evil may seize us even if we approach it out of mere curiosity. If we take an interest in it we may become its worshippers or slaves. The wise man eschews it altogether, and so he enrolls among the Servants of Allah, and gets the good news of His Mercy and Good Pleasure.

... فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ (١٧)

so announce the Good News to My Servants --

...الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ

18. Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it:

C4269. The Commentators construe this clause in two alternative ways.

1. If **"word"** be taken as any word, the clause would mean that good men listen to all that is said and choose the best of it.
2. If **"word"** be taken to mean Allah's Word, it would mean that they should listen reverently to it, and where permissive and alternative courses are allowed

for those who are not strong enough to follow the higher course, those "endued with understanding" should prefer to attempt the higher course of conduct.

For example, it is permitted (within limits) to punish those who wrong us, but the nobler course is to repel evil with good (23:96): we should try to follow the nobler course.

I prefer the latter construction: it accords better with my interpretation of the last verse: see n. 4268.

... أُوْلَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ...

those are the ones whom Allah has guided,

... وَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (١٨)

and those are the ones endued with understanding.

أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ...

19. Is, then, one against whom the decree of Punishment is justly due (equal to one who eschews evil)?

C4270. If a man is already steeped in sin and has rejected Allah's Grace, how can we expect Revelation to work in his soul?

... أَفَأَنتَ تُنقِذُ مَن فِي النَّارِ (١٩)

Wouldst thou, then, deliver one (who is) in the fire?

لَكِنِ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِّن فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَّبْنِيَّةٌ...

20. But it is for those who fear their Lord, that lofty **mansions**, one above another, have been built:

C4271. Cf. 29:58, and 34:37.

The idea of heaven here is that of a Home of sublimity and beauty, with a picturesque outlook, such as we would describe in this life by the type of a palace by gently-flowing streams. The mansions will also suggest generous space and architectural beauty, tiers upon tiers piled one upon another.

... تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

beneath them flow rivers (of delight):

... وَعْدَ اللَّهِ...

(such is) the promise of Allah:

... لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ (٢٠)

never doth Allah fail in (His) promise.

C4272. Miad: the time, place, and manner of the fulfilment of a Promise.

Allah's promise will be fulfilled in all particulars better than we can possibly imagine.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاء...

21. Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky,

... فَسَلَكَهُ يَنَابِيعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

and leads it through springs in the earth?

C4273. The circuit of water, by which the rain falls from the clouds, is absorbed through the earth, and flows through rivers or underground streams to the sea, where it again rises as vapour and forms clouds, was explained in notes 3111-12 to 25:53.

Here our attention is drawn to one portion of the process. The rain fructifies the soil and the seeds. Produce of various kinds is raised. The harvest ripens and is gathered in. The plants wither, dry up, and crumble away. Men and animals are fed. And the circuit starts again in another season. Here is a Sign of the Grace and Goodness of Allah, clear to those who understand.

... ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا مُّخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ...

Then He causes to grow, therewith, produce of various colors:

... ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ حُطَامًا...

then it withers;

thou wilt see it grow yellow;

then He makes it dry up and crumble away.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٢١)

Truly, in this, is a Message of remembrance to men of understanding.

C.204 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:22-52)

What distance separates the man
Whose heart is melted by the message
Of Allah and enlightened by His Light,
And him who rejects Revelation; straight
Is His World and clear. Any doubts in the minds
Of men will be resolved after death;
Even now, Allah's Signs are enough; no other
Can guide. Death and his twin brother,
Sleep, are in the hands of Allah: To Him
Is our Goal. He will Judge in the End.
His Will is all-in-all. No other thing
Can be of any account before His Law.

Section 3

أَفَمَن شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ...

22. Is one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam, so that he has received enlightenment from Allah, (no better than one hard-hearted)?

C4274. Those who listen to Allah's Message find at each stage Allah's Grace helping them more and more to expand their spiritual understanding and to receive

Allah's light, so that they travel farther and farther to their Goal in the Path of Truth and Righteousness.

They are not to be compared to those who shut out Allah's Light from their hearts. See next note.

... فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مِّن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ...

Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against celebrating the praises of Allah!

C4275. Just as there is spiritual progress for those who seek Allah, so there is more and more spiritual retrogression for those who close their hearts to Allah. Their hearts get heartened, and they allow less and less Allah's Grace to penetrate within.

But it is obvious that they flounder on the Way, and cannot walk with the firm steps of those of assured Faith.

... أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٢)

They are manifestly wandering (in error)!

... اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا

23. Allah has revealed (from time to time) the most beautiful Message in the form of a Book,

consistent with itself,

C4276. Is **Mutashabih** here to be understood in the same sense as in 3:7? See n. 347.

The better opinion is that there is a slightly different shade of meaning here, as suggested by the context.

In the earlier passage, it was opposed to Muhkam: here it is contrasted or compared to Mathani.

The root meaning is: 'having something similar; working by analogy or allegory, or parable; having its parts consistent with each other'. The last meaning I adopt here.

The Quran was revealed in parts at different times. And yet its parts all conform to each other. There is no contradiction or inconsistency anywhere. (R).

... مَّثَانِيَ...

(yet) repeating (its teaching in various aspects):

C4277. Mathani:- Cf. 15:87, where we have translated "oft-repeated": "the seven oft- repeated (verses)". See n. 2008 to that passage.

Here the meaning is similar, but the context gives a different colour to it, as is seen in the translation.

... تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ...

the skins of those who fear their Lord tremble thereat;

C4278. The skin is the outer integument of the body. It receives the first shock from the impact of anything unusual, and it trembles and its hair stands on end under excitement.

So in spiritual matters the first stimulation from Allah's Message is external. Those who receive Faith do it as it were with tremor and not with apathy. But the next stage is that it penetrates their outer nature and goes right into their hearts. Their whole nature is "softened" to receive the beneficent Message, and it transforms them through and through.

... ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ...

then their skins and their hearts do soften to the celebration of Allah's praises.

... ذَٰلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ ...

Such is the guidance of Allah:

... يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاء ...

He guides therewith whom He pleases,

... وَمَن يُضْلِلْ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٢٣)

but such as Allah leaves to stray, can have none to guide.

C4279. "Whom He pleases" and **"leaves to stray"** are explained fully in n. 2133 to 16:93.

See also 14:4 and n. 1875.

أَفَمَن يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

24. Is, then, one who has to fear the brunt of the Penalty on the Day of Judgement (and receive it) on his face, (like one guarded therefrom)?

C4280. The unrepentant Sinners will receive the full Penalty on the Day of Judgment. They will receive it full in the face, i.e., their whole being will be affected by it. Their hands will be tied, and they cannot therefore use their hands to ward off the Penalty of the Fire: in any case their hands will not have the power to ward it off.

Are such helpless people to be compared for a moment with people who have received Grace and are therefore guarded from all harm and danger?

Certainly not.

To the evil the fruit of their deed, and to the good the grace of their Lord!

... وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ (٢٤)

It will be said to the wrongdoers:

"Taste ye (the fruits of) what ye earned!"

C4281. That is, of all their misdeeds, all the evil which they did in the world.

كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

25. Those before them (also) rejected (revelation),

... فَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٥)

and so the Punishment came to them from directions they did not perceive.

C4282. Cf. 16:26.

They will be punished from quarters or in ways they do not perceive. From their Unbelief and Rebellion they think they derive great advantages, but they suddenly find out, when too late, that that which they exulted in was the cause of their own undoing.

فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

26. So Allah gave them a taste of humiliation in the present life,

C4283. Cf. 2:114.

Sin often brings disgrace and humiliation in this life, but the greater and truer punishment is in the Hereafter.

But men often do not know the inwardness of this matter. If they flourish here for a time, they think they will escape the real consequences in the Hereafter. Or if they suffer little harm here, they think that will make up the Penalty, and they will escape the Hereafter.

Both ideas are wrong.

... وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦)

but greater is the Punishment of the Hereafter, if they only knew!

... وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ...

27. We have put forth for men, in this Qur'án every kind of Parable,

C4284. Men can only understand high spiritual truths by parables and similitudes and these are given abundantly in the Quran.

The object is, not merely to tell stories, but to teach lessons of spiritual wisdom.

... لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٧)

in order that they may receive admonition.

... قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا ...

28. (It is) a Qur'án in Arabic,

C4285. Previous revelations had been in other languages. Now the revelation was given in Arabia in Arabic itself, the language of the country which all could understand. And it is a beautiful language, straight and flexible, and fit to be the vehicle of sublime truths.

... غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٢٨)

without any crookedness (therein): in order that they may guard against Evil.

C4286. See 18:I and n. 2326.

Cf. also 7:45, n. 1024; and 19:36, n. 2488.

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا...

29. Allah puts forth a Parable --

... رَّجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاء مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ...

a man belonging to many partners at variance with each other, and a man belonging entirely to one master:

C4287. The difference between the creed of Polytheism and the Gospel of Unity is explained by the analogy of two men.

One belongs to many masters; the masters disagree among themselves, and the poor man of many masters has to suffer from the quarrel of his many masters; it is an impossible and unnatural position.

The other serves only one master, his master is good, and does all he can for his servant; the servant can concentrate his attention on his service; he is happy himself and his service is efficiently performed.

Can there be any doubt as to

- which of them is the happier,
- and which of them is in a more natural position?

No man can serve two, still less numerous, masters.

... هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا...

are those two equal in comparison?

... الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ...

Praise be to Allah!

C4288. Allah is praised that He has put us, not under gods many and lords many, but has, out of His infinite Mercy, allowed us direct approach to Him, the One, the True, the Eternal.

بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٩)

But most of them have no knowledge.

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُم مَّيِّتُونَ (٣٠)

30. Truly thou wilt die (one day) and truly they (too) will die (one day).

C4289. Even the prophets are not exempt from bodily death, much less the righteous, but they live in their beneficent work and the memories they leave behind them.

All men have to die, good and bad alike. But there is a life after death, and in that life all the unexplained things about which people dispute in this world will be made clear in the presence of Allah.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُونَ (٣١)

31. In the end will ye (all), on the Day of Judgement, settle your disputes in the presence of your Lord.

C4290. See last note.

Section 4

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَذَبَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ إِذْ جَاءهُ...

32. Who, then, doth more wrong than one who utters a lie concerning Allah, and rejects the truth when it comes to him?

C4291. When the creature deliberately adopts and utters falsehoods against his own Creator, in spite of the Truth being brought, as it were, to his very door by Allah's Signs, what offence can we imagine more heinous than this?

In Christian theology this is the blasphemy "against the Holy Ghost" spoken of in Matt. 12:31-32:

> "whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man", (Christ), "it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come".

... أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ (٣٢)

Is there not in Hell an abode for blasphemers?

C4292. Cf. 3:151; 16:29. [Eds.]

وَالَّذِي جَاء بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهِ...

33. And he who brings the Truth and he who confirms (and supports) it --

C4293. This is true of the Prophet, and all Prophets of God and all righteous persons. Any one who preaches the Truth and brings home Allah's Signs to men is performing the duty of a right and noble life.

In this he confirms the teaching of all previous Prophets of Allah. Any one who supports and confirms such a teacher is also doing his duty and on the right way. (R).

... أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ (٣٣)

such are the men who do right.

لَهُم مَّا يَشَاءونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ...

34. They shall have all that they wish for, in the presence of their Lord:

C4294. At that stage their wills will have been purified. If an earthly king gives a decoration, how much greater is the honour when the investiture takes place by the king himself personally?

... ذَلِكَ جَزَاء الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٣٤)

such is the reward of those who do good:

لِيُكَفِّرَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا...

35. So that Allah will turn off from them (even) the worst in their deeds

C4295. The conjunction (***lam*** in Arabic, translated "so that") indicates here the results, not the purpose. Allah's Reward is so bounteous, that if we truly and sincerely put our will into His keeping, He will remove the consequences not only of our minor faults but of the worst of our sins, and judge us according to the very best of our deeds.

... وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٣٥)

and give them their reward according to the best of what they have done.

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ...

36. Is not Allah enough for His servant?

C4296. The righteous man will find Allah enough for all the protection he needs, all the rest and peace he craves for, and all the happiness he can imagine.

If the evil ones wish to frighten him with false gods, he knows that that is mere superstition.

In the case of idols to whom worship is paid, this is easily intelligible. But there are other false gods which men worship,-wealth, position, power, science, selfish desire, and so on.

The idea may occur to them: "this is the right course, but what will men say?" or "shall I lose my case if I tell the truth?" or "will it ruin my chances if I denounce sin in high places?" All such false gods will only mislead and leave their victims in the lurch. The worship of them will lose them the Mercy of Allah, which wants to guide and comfort all who seek Allah.

... وَيُخَوِّفُونَكَ بِالَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ...

But they try to frighten thee with other (gods) besides him!

... وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٣٦)

For such as Allah leaves to stray, there can be no guide.

وَمَن يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن مُّضِلٍّ...

37. And such as Allah doth guide there can be none to lead astray,

C4297. On the other hand if any one holds fast to Allah's Truth, nothing can mislead or betray him.

... أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِعَزِيزٍ ذِي انتِقَامٍ (٣٧)

is not Allah Exalted in Power, (able to enforce His Will), Lord of Retribution?

C4298. Allah's Power can protect, and will defeat all plots against His Will, as well as punish Evil when it gets beyond bounds.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ...

38. If indeed thou ask them who it is that created the heavens and the earth,

C4299. Cf. 29:61; also n. 2927 to 23:85.

Most worshippers of false gods are not either atheists or skeptics. They admit the existence of Allah but it has not come into their hearts and souls: it has not been translated into their lives. They run after false worship on account of ancestral custom or on account of their thoughtlessness or false environment, or on account of their own selfish desires or limited outlook. To them is addressed the argument:

'Ultimately your false gods can do nothing for you: why not turn to the One True God, on Whom you depend, and Who can give you Grace and Mercy, Justice and Punishment?'

... لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ ...

they would be sure to say, "Allah."

... قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّهِ...

Say: "See ye then?

The things that ye invoke besides Allah, can they, if Allah wills some Penalty for me, remove His Penalty?

... أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِهِ...

Or if He wills some Grace for me, can they keep back His Grace?"

C4300. Cf. 33:17,

... قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ...

Say:

"Sufficient is Allah for me!

... عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (٣٨)

In Him trust those who put their trust."

C4301. Cf. 12:67 and 14:12.

Allah alone is He Who will and can discharge any trust put in Him. All other things will fail. Therefore those who put their trust in anything should put their trust in Allah.

قُلْ يَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ...

39. Say:

"O my people! Do whatever ye can: I will do (my part):

C4302. Cf. 11:121 and n. 1624a.

... فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩)

but soon will ye know --

... مَن يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ

40. "Who it is to whom come a Penalty of ignominy,

C4303. Cf. 11:93.

The two clauses, about those who suffer a Penalty of ignominy and those on whom descends a lasting Penalty, apparently refer to the same persons in two different aspects:

- they suffer shame, and
- their punishment endures.

... وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ (٤٠)

and on whom descends a Penalty that abides."

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ...

41. Verily We have revealed the Book to thee in Truth, for (instructing) mankind.

C4304. Revelation is sent by Allah through His messenger, but it is for all. It is given in order that men and women may be taught Righteousness. It is given in Truth: there is no pretence about it. It is for their own good. If they reject it and follow Evil, the loss is their own.

... فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَلِنَفْسِهِ...

He, then, that receives guidance benefits his own soul:

... وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا...

but he that strays injures his own soul.

... وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ (٤١)

Nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs.

C4305. Allah's messengers do all they can to teach mankind. But they cannot force men's wills. If men reject their teaching, the account of the rejecters is with Allah.

Cf. 6:107 and n. 935.

Section 5

... اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا

42. It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death:

C4306. The mystery of life and death, sleep and dreams, is a fascinating enigma, of which the solution is perhaps beyond the ken of man. A vast mass of superstition as well as imaginative and psychological literature has grown up about it. But the simplest and truest religious doctrine is laid down here in a few words.

In death we surrender our physical life, but our soul does not die; it goes back to a plane of existence in which it is more conscious of the realities of the spiritual world: **"Allah takes the soul"**.

... وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا...

and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep:

C4307. Cf. 6:60.

What is sleep?

As far as animal life is concerned, it is the cessation of the working of the nervous system, though other animal functions, such as digestion, growth, and the circulation of the blood, continue, possibly at a different pace.

It is the repose of the nervous system, and in this respect it is common to man and animals, and perhaps even to plants, if, as is probable, plants have a nervous system. The mental processes (and certainly volition) are also suspended in sleep, except that in ordinary dreams there is a medley of recollections, which often present vividly to our consciousness things that do not or cannot happen in nature as we know it in our coordinated minds.

But there is another kind of dream which is rarer-one in which the dreamer sees things as they actually happen, backwards or forwards in time, or in which gifted individuals see spiritual truths otherwise imperceptible to them. How can we explain this?

It is suggested that our soul or personality,-that something which is above our animal life-is then in a plane of spiritual existence akin to physical death (see last note), when we are nearer to Allah.

In poetic imagery, Sleep is "twin-brother to Death".

... فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَى إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى...

those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed.

C4308. Sleep being twin-brother to Death, our souls are for the time being released from the bondage of the flesh. Allah takes them for the time being.

If, as some do, we are to die peacefully in sleep, our soul does not come back to the physical body, and the latter decays and die.

If we have still some period of life to fulfil according to Allah's decree, our soul comes back to the body, and we resume our functions in this life.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٤٢)

Verily in this are Signs for those who reflect.

C4309. If we contemplate these things, we can see more clearly many spiritual truths: e.g.

1. that our bodily life and death are not the whole story of our existence;
2. that in our bodily life we may be dead to the spiritual world, and in our bodily death, may be our awakening to the spiritual world;
3. that our nightly Sleep, besides performing the function of rest to our physical life, gives us a foretaste of what we call death, which does not end our personality; and
4. that the Resurrection is not more wonderful than our daily rising from Sleep, "twin-brother to Death".

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاء...

43. What!

Do they take for intercessors others besides Allah?

C4310. Let alone worship, men should not rely upon any power or person other than Allah to help them out or intercede for them. When it is idols, they are poor lifeless things which have obviously neither power nor intelligence. But even prophets or saints or heroes have no power to intercede except as Allah wills and permits. See next note.

... قُلْ أَوَلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤٣)

Say: "Even if they have no power whatever and no intelligence?"

قُل لِّلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا..

44. Say: "To Allah belongs exclusively (the right to grant) Intercession:

C4311. For **Shafaat** (Intercession, Advocacy) see 2:255; 10:3; 20:109, n. 2634; and 21:28, n. 2688.

It follows that no one can intercede with Allah, except

- by Allah's permission, and
- for those who have prepared themselves by penitence for Allah's acceptance.

Even in earthly Courts, Advocacy is not permitted to any one; the Advocate must be granted the position of Advocate before he can plead before the judge. Nor can it be supposed that a plea for forgiveness or mercy can be put forward except on grounds recognised by equity and justice.

... لَّهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth:

... ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤٤)

in the End, it is to Him that ye shall be brought back."

C4312. At all times, including our present life, all dominion belongs to Allah. At the End of the present plane of existence, we shall be placed before Allah for Judgment. Cf. 10:4.

...وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ...

45. When Allah, the One and Only is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter are filled with disgust and horror;

C4313. To evil ones, the mention of the exclusive service of Good is hateful: they only rejoice when other motives are added, e.g., personal indulgence, ancestral custom, and numerous things in life which compete with Allah's Law in this world.

... وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِن دُونِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٤٥)

but when (gods) other than He are mentioned behold, they are filled with joy!

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ...

46. Say:

"O Allah! Creator of the heavens and the earth! Knower of all that is hidden and open!

C4314. The mysteries of life and death, of worship and spiritual growth, are matters of high moment, which it may be difficult for us to apprehend in this present life. It is no use arguing about them and plunging in endless controversies.

The proper attitude is to appeal to Allah humbly to accept our purified hearts and Faith, in the firm hope that everything which is now vague to us will be cleared up in the Hereafter, and to pray to Him for His guidance and mercy.

... أَنتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٦)

It is Thou that wilt judge between Thy Servants in those matters about which they have differed."

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ...

47. Even if the wrongdoers had all that there is on earth, and as much more,

C4315. Cf. 13:18.

Those who reject Allah's Message must realise that the time will come when they will wish they had sacrificed everything in the cause of Truth and Righteousness. It will be too late then. Why not examine the matter seriously now and accept Allah's Grace and Light?

... لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِن سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

(in vain) would they offer it for ransom from the pain of the Penalty on the Day of Judgement:

... وَبَدَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ (٤٧)

but something will confront them from Allah, which they could never have counted upon!

C4316. This something will be beyond anything they can conceive of in this life. Just as the righteous will then

attain a bliss which no human imagination can conceive of now, so the unrighteous will be in a misery of which they can form no conception now.

See next note.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا...

48. For the evils of their Deeds will confront them,

... وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُون (٤٨)

and they will be (completely) encircled by that which they used to mock at!

C4317. How humiliating it will be for them to realise that the things they used to mock at are realities all around them, and the things they were so eager to pursue are mere falsehoods or vanities!

فَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا...

49. Now, when trouble touches man, he cries to Us;

C4318. Cf. 30:33 and n. 3545.

... ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلْنَاهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا قَالَ ...

but when We bestow a favor upon him as from Ourselves, he says,

C4319. Cf. 39:8 above.

... إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ...

"This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge (I have)!"

C4320. Cf. 28:78, and n . 3408.

Prosperity may be a trial as much as adversity.

... بَلْ هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٩)

Nay, but this is but a trial, but most of them understand not!

قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

50. Thus did the (generations) before them say!

... فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٥٠)

But all that they did was of no profit to them.

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا...

51. Nay,the evil results of their deeds overtook them.

C4321. Cf. 16:34.

... وَالَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ سَيُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا كَسَبُوا...

And the wrongdoers of this (generation) -- the evil results of their deeds will soon overtake them (too),

C4322. It is the same story through the ages. People laugh at Truth, persecute Truth, and try to destroy Truth. But Allah's Plan is never to be frustrated. It will be carried out, and only the enemies of Truth will accomplish their own undoing. So it happened in Arabia: so will it happen always and everywhere.

... وَمَا هُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٥١)

and they will never be able to frustrate (Our Plan)!

أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ...

52. Know they not that Allah enlarges the provision or restricts it, for any He pleases?

C4323. Cf. 28:82.

Allah's gifts are given to all men-to some in a greater degree than to others. But it is all done according to His wise Plan, for His Will is just and looks to the good of all creatures.

No one should therefore be puffed up in prosperity or cast down in adversity. Prosperity does not necessarily mean merit on man's part, nor adversity the reverse. Thinking men bear in mind the large Plan-which is visible in all Allah's Signs.

... إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢)

Verily, in this are signs for those who believe!

C.205 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:53-75)

But no soul need be in despair because
Of its sin: Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy are
Unbounded. Turn to Allah in repentance
Now, for Judgement it will be too late.
Unity in worship and life is commanded
By Allah. Go not astray. When Judgement
Comes, it will be a new World.
In perfect justice will the followers
Of Evil be sorted out from the Good.
And the righteous will rejoice, singing
Praises to Allah with the angels on high.

Section 6

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ...

53. Say:

"O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا...

for Allah forgives all sins:

C4324. Forgives all sins: i.e., on sincere repentance and amendment of conduct.

... إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥٣)

for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ...

54. "Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (Will), before the Penalty comes on you:

C4325. The exhortation in brief is: 'Repent and work righteousness, before it becomes too late'.

No help will come to you when the Judgment is actually established and you stand before the Judgement Seat.

... ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (٥٤)

after that ye shall not be helped.

وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً...

55. "And follow the Best of (the courses) revealed to you from your Lord, before the Penalty comes on you -- of a sudden,

C4326. Cf. 39:18, and n. 4269.

Allah's Command meets the weakness of His weakest servants, and only asks that His servants should surrender their selfish will to Allah's Will.

In divine compassion, therefore, we are allowed to do just what we can, even though our standard should fall short of the highest standard. But our aim should be to follow the highest standard, and Allah's Grace will come to our assistance. But we must do so in this life-and at once, as soon as the Word penetrates our mind or understanding. We must not delay a moment, for the Judgment may come at any time, suddenly, before we even perceive where we are.

... وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (٥٥)

while ye perceive not! --

أَن تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَى عَلَى مَا فَرَّطتُ فِي جَنبِ اللَّهِ...

56. "Lest the soul should (then) say:

Ah! woe is me! -- in that I neglected (my duty) towards Allah,

C4327. Many kinds of sighs and regrets will then assail us.

In the first place, we shall see our shortcomings: we were negligent when we should have been serious: we mocked when we should have tried to learn and understand. But it will be too late then to retrieve our position.

... وَإِن كُنتُ لَمِنَ السَّاخِرِينَ (٥٦)

and was but among those who mocked!' --

أَوْ تَقُولَ لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٥٧)

57. "Or (lest) it should say:

'If only Allah had guided me, I should certainly have been among the righteous!' --

C4328. In the second place, we might be inclined to say,

'I wish I had received warning or guidance'. But this would not be true, because the warning and guidance are being conveyed in the clearest manner in Allah's Revelation. "that is the force of 'lest it should say'. It could have said so, had it not seen that the objection is clearly anticipated in the call to repent and in the seaming about the Hereafter.

أَوْ تَقُولَ حِينَ تَرَى الْعَذَابَ ...

58. "Or (lest) it should say when it (actually) sees the Penalty:

C4329. In the third place, when we stand face to face with the Penalty of our own deeds, we might say, 'I wish I had another chance' But not one, but many, chances are being given, especially when we are told (verse 53 above): 'Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful'. The force of 'lest it should say' here is the same as explained in the last note.

... لَوْ أَنَّ لِي كَرَّةً فَأَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٥٨)

'If only I had another chance I should certainly be among those who do good!'

بَلَى قَدْ جَاءتْكَ آيَاتِي...

59. "(The reply will be)

'Nay, but there came to thee My signs

C4330. The reply explains how all such pleas have been anticipated and met. It was deliberate rejection that will deserve and meet its consequences. It is further

explained that the motive of sin, as with Satan, was haughtiness and Self. (R).

... فَكَذَّبْتَ بِهَا...

and thou didst reject them:

... وَاسْتَكْبَرْتَ...

thou wast haughty,

... وَكُنتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٩)

and became one of those who reject Faith!'"

C4331. Cf. 2:34.

The example of the arch-sinner illustrates what happens in a minor degree in every kind of sinner.

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ...

60. On the Day of Judgement wilt thou see those who told lies against Allah;

their faces will be turned black;

C4332. As spotless white is the symbol of purity, honour and truth, so black is the symbol of evil, disgrace, and falsehood. Perhaps **"black"** in connection with Hell also refers to the scorching punishment of the Fire.

... أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٦٠)

is there not in Hell an abode for the Haughty?

C4333. Cf. above, 39:32, and n. 4292, where the subtle implication of the interrogative form is explained.

وَيُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ...

61. But Allah will deliver the righteous to their place of salvation:

C4334. Mafazat: place or state of safety or salvation, place or state of victory or achievement; accomplishment of wish or desire.

This contrasted against the frustration, failure, and perdition of the children of evil,-what may be called damnation in theological phraseology.

... لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٦١)

no evil shall touch them, nor shall they grieve.

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

62. Allah is the Creator of all things,

... وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (٦٢)

and He is the Guardian and Disposer of all affairs.

C4335. Allah has not only created all the Worlds, but He maintains them and cares for them. He does not sit apart from His world. Everything depends upon Him.

لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

63. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth:

... وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٦٣)

and those who reject the Signs of Allah, it is they who will be in loss.

C4336. Allah has nothing to lose by the rebellion or disobedience of His creatures.

It is they who lose, because they go counter to their own nature, the beautiful mould in which Allah created them.

Section 7

قُلْ أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَأْمُرُونِّي أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا الْجَاهِلُونَ (٦٤)

64. Say: "Is it someone other than Allah that ye order me to worship, O ye ignorant ones?"

C4337. "Order me": there is great irony here. The Prophet of Allah turns to his critics and says:

"You arrogate to yourselves the right to order me how to worship! But who are you?

You are only ignorant men! My commission is from Allah. It is the same as came to Prophets of Allah before me in all ages, viz.,

- that the only Truth is in the Gospel of Unity; and
- that if you worship other things and turn away from Allah, your life will be wasted and all your probation will have been of no account." (R).

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ...

65. But it has already been revealed to thee -- as it was to those before thee --

C4338. The Message of Unity, renewed in Islam, has been the Message of Allah since the world began.

... لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٦٥)

"If thou wert to join (gods with Allah), truly fruitless will be thy work (in life), and thou wilt surely be in the ranks of those who lose (all spiritual good)."

C4339. Cf. 5:5.

False worship means that we run after fruitless things, and the main purpose of our spiritual lives is lost.

بَلِ اللَّهَ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُن مِّنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (٦٦)

66. Nay, but worship Allah, and be of those who give thanks.

C4340. To **"give thanks"** is to show by our conduct that we esteem the gifts of Allah and will use them in His service.

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ...

67. No just estimate have they made of Allah, such as is due to Him:

C4341. Cf. 6:91, and n. 909; and 22:74.

In running after false gods or the powers of nature they have forgotten that all creatures are as nothing before Allah.

... وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

on the Day of Judgement the whole of the earth will be but His handful,

C4342. See last note.

The whole earth will be no more to Allah than a thing that a man might enclose in the hollow of his hand, nor will the heavens with their vast expanse be more than a scroll, which a man might roll up with his right hand, the hand of power and action.

Cf. 21:104, and 81:1.

... وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ...

and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand:

... سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٧)

Glory to Him!

High is He above the Partners they attribute to Him!

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ...

68. The Trumpet will (just) be sounded,

...فَصَعِقَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاءَ اللَّهُ...

when all that are in the heavens and on earth will swoon, except such as it will please Allah (to exempt).

C4343. Saiqa implies the idea of a swoon, or loss of all consciousness of being: it implies a cessation of the normal functioning of the usual powers of life or feeling.

- With the first Trumpet of the Resurrection the whole world will cease to be in the form and the relations which we see now:
- there will be a new heaven and a new earth, see 14:48, n. 1925;
- human souls will for the time being be dazed and lose all memory or consciousness of time or place or personality.

- With the second one, they will stand in a new world; they will see with clearer vision than ever before; and judgment will proceed. (R).

... ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى...

Then will a second one be sounded,

... فَإِذَا هُم قِيَامٌ يَنظُرُونَ (٦٨)

when behold, they will be standing and looking on!

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا...

69. And the Earth will shine with the glory of its Lord:

C4344. It will be a new Earth. All traces of injustice or inequality, darkness or evil, will have gone.

There will be the one universal Light, the Glory of Allah, which will now illuminate all.

Falsehood, pretence, and illusion will have disappeared. Everything will be seen in its true light.

... وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ...

the Record (of Deeds) will be placed (open);

the prophets and the witnesses will be brought forward:

... وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٦٩)

and a just decision pronounced between them; and they will not be wronged (in the least).

C4345. It is in such a scene of Reality that Judgment will be held. Before the Throne of Allah, the book of each man's deeds and motives will be placed wide open, which all may see; the Prophets and Preachers of Truth and the martyrs who gave their lives or made their real sacrifices in the cause of Truth, will be in the Court, to give evidence; and the decision pronounced will be absolutely just, for the Judge will not only be just, but He will know every fact and circumstance, and His wisdom will give due weight to everything, great or small. (R).

وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ...

70. And to every soul will be paid in full (the fruit) of its deeds;

... وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٠)

and (Allah) knoweth best all that they do.

C4346. In an earthy court, a decision may possibly go wrong because the judge is deceived; here no deceit or mistake will be possible, for Allah knows all, and knows it better than any one else can. (R).

Section 8

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا...

71. The Unbelievers will be led to Hell in crowds;

C4347. Crowds: this is the word which gives the key-note to the Surah. If the soul does not stand to its own convictions or search out the Truth by itself, it will be classed with the crowds that go to Perdition!

... حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا فُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا...

until, when they arrive there, its gates will be opened,

... وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ...

and its Keepers will say,

"Did not messengers come to you from among yourselves,

C4348. The **Keepers** may be supposed to be angels, who know nothing of the conditions of evil on this earth, and are surprised at such crowds coming to the "Evil Abode". (R).

... يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاء يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا...

rehearsing to you the Signs of your Lord, and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?"

... قَالُوا بَلَى...

The answer will be: "True:

... وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧١)

but the Decree of Punishment has been proved true against the Unbelievers!"

C4349. Cf. 10:33.

The answer is perhaps given by other angels: 'yes; messengers were sent to them from among themselves, to warn them and proclaim to them Mercy through repentance; but the decree of Allah, which warned them of punishment, has now come true against them, for they rebelled and were haughty; they rejected Truth, Faith, and Mercy!'

قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

72. (To them) will be said:

"Enter ye the gates of Hell, to dwell therein:

... فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٧٢)

and evil is (this) abode of the arrogant!"

C4350. As elsewhere, the root of Evil is pointed out to be in self-love and arrogance.

Cf. 2:34, etc.

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا...

73. And those who feared their Lord will be led to the Garden in crowds:

C4351. The righteous ones will also go in crowds, and not be alone. There is now a true sorting out. Verses 73-75 are parallel in contrast to verses 71-72 above.

...حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا...

until behold, they arrive there; its gates will be opened:

... وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ...

and its Keepers will say: "Peace be upon you!

... طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣)

Well have ye done!

Enter ye here, to dwell therein."

C4352. The angels in heaven are not surprised at the advent of the good and righteous souls. They are glad; they greet them with the salutation of Peace; they congratulate them; and they welcome them in.

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ...

74. They will say: "Praise be to Allah,

C4353. This is said by the new arrivals in heaven. As is right, they begin with the Praises of Allah, which shows at once their satisfaction and their gratitude.

... الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ...

Who has truly fulfilled His promise to us, and has given us (this) land in heritage:

C4354. In heritage: i.e. as our Portion.

Cf. 3:180, and n. 485; 6:165, and n. 988.

There is no question here of their passing on any property to heirs. They are the final possessors of Heaven for eternity, by the grace of Allah.

نَتَبَوَّأُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ...

we can dwell in the Garden as we will:

... فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ (٧٤)

how excellent a reward for those who work (righteousness)!"

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِّينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ...

75. And thou wilt see the angels surrounding the Throne (Divine) on all sides, singing Glory and Praise to their Lord.

... وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ...

The Decision between them (at Judgement) will be in (perfect) justice.

... وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٥)

And the cry (on all sides) will be,

"Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!"

C4355. These are the opening words of the first Surah, and they describe the atmosphere of the final Bliss in Heaven, in the light of the Countenance of their Lord, the Lord of all!



يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ

(Allah) knows of (the tricks) that deceive with the eyes, and all that hearts (of men) conceal.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Mu'min

الْمُؤْمِنِ

Introduction and Summary

The Surah is called **Ghafir** (Forgiver, see verse 3), It is also called "The Believer (Mu'min) from the story of the individual Believer among the people of Pharaoh, who declares his faith and looks to the Future (verses 28-45). In Surah 23, called Believers (Mu'minun), the argument was about the collective force of Faith and virtue. Here it is about the Individual's witness to Faith and Virtue, and his triumph in the End.

We now begin a series of seven Surahs (40-46) to which are affixed the Abbreviated Letters ***Ha Mim***. Chronologically they all

belong to the same period, the later Makkan Period, and they immediately follow the last Surah in time. About the Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix 1 at the end of Surah 2.

As to the precise meaning of ***Ha Mim*** no authoritative explanation is available. If ***Mim*** here has a signification similar to ***Mim*** in ***Alif, Lam, Mim*** (see n. 25 to 2:1), it means the End of things, the Last Day, and all these Surahs direct our special attention to that ***Ha***, the emphatic guttural, in contrast with the softer breathing of ***Alif***, may be meant to suggest that the Beginning (see n. 25 to 2:1, last paragraph) is only for the End, the Present for the Future, and to emphasize the eschatological element in Faith. But this is mere conjecture, and should be taken for no more than it is worth.

The general theme of the whole series is the relation of Faith to Unfaith, Revelation to Rejection, Goodness to Evil. Truth to Falsehood.

It is shown that the first in each of these pairs is the real friend, helper, and protector of man, while the second is his enemy. The very word ***Hamim*** in that sense is used in Surah 40 and 41 (40:18 and 41:34), while in the other Surahs we have words of equivalent import, e.g.

- ***wali*** or ***nasir*** (42:8 and 42:31);
- ***qarin*** (43:36), 43:38);
- ***mawla*** (44:41);
- ***awliya'*** or ***nasirin*** (45:19, 45:34); and
- **awliya** (46:32).

Is it permissible to connect the abbreviated Letters ***Ha Mim*** with these ideas as expressed in the word ***Hamim***?

Another suggestion worthy of consideration is that ***Ha*** stands for ***Hayy***, and ***Mim*** for ***Qayyum***. These are two attributes of Allah, meaning,

- the Living, and
- the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.

The one points to Life, and Revelation, and the other to the Hereafter and Eternity; and both these matters are specially dealt with in the seven ***Ha Mim*** Surahs. The first letter of ***Hayy (Ha)*** is appropriate for life, and the last letter of ***Qayyum*** is appropriate for the Last Days, the Ma'ad, the Hereafter. Again this is mere conjecture, and should not be taken for more than it is worth.

Summary- Faith is ever justified, for Allah forgives; but evil deeds must have evil fruits, for Allah knows and is just (40:1-20 and C. 206).

In all history Evil came to evil; the protest of Faith, in the midst of Evil, may be ignored; but Faith is protected by Allah, while Evil perishes (40:21-50, and C. 207).

No doubt is there of the Future Judgement; the Power, Goodness, and Justice of God are manifest; will man dispute, or will he accept the Signs before it is too late? (40:51-85, and C. 208).

C.206 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:1-20)

Believe in God. For He Perfect
In Knowledge and Power, forgives Sins
And accepts Repentance, and justly
Enforces His Law. Those who reject Him
Are but in deceit: His glory is sung
By the highest and purest. Give all devotion
To Him alone. The Day of Requital
Is ever drawing near, when Falsehood
Will vanish, and Allah's Truth and Justice
Will be established for all Eternity.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim.

C4356. See the Introduction to this Surah.

تَنزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٢)

2. The revelation of this Book is from Allah, Exalted in Power, Full of Knowledge --

C4357. This verse is the same as Surah 39:1, except for the last words describing the attribute of Allah.

In Surah 39:1, it was "Full of Wisdom", because stress was laid on the wisdom of Allah's Plan in ordering His World. In this Surah the stress is laid on Allah's Knowledge, before which the shallow knowledge of men is vain (40:83).

غَافِرِ الذَّنبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ...

3. Who forgiveth Sin, accepteth Repentance,

C4358. Allah's knowledge is supreme and all-reaching. But there are other attributes of His, which concern us even more intimately; e.g., He forgives sin and accepts our repentance when it is sincere and results in our change of heart and life:

but He is also just, and strict in punishment; and so no loophole will be left for Evil except in repentance. And further, all His attributes reach forward to everything: His Mercy, as well as His Knowledge and Justice; His Bounties as well as His Punishments.

... شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ ذِي الطَّوْلِ ...

is strict in Punishment, and hath a Long Reach (in all things).

... لَا إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ...

There is no god but He:

... إِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (٣)

to Him is the Final Goal.

مَا يُجَادِلُ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

4. None can dispute about the **Signs of Allah** but the Unbelievers.

C4359. Allah's knowledge and attributes are perfect, and everything around us proclaims this. We are surrounded by His Signs. It is only want of Faith that will make people dispute about them.

... فَلَا يَغْرُرْكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمْ فِي الْبِلَادِ (٤)

Let not, then, their strutting about through the land deceive thee!

C4360. Cf. 3:196.

Their strutting about shows how little they can read the Signs.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَالْأَحْزَابُ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ...

5. But (there were people) before them, who denied (the Signs) -- the People of Noah, and the confederates (of Evil) after them;

C4361. Cf. 38:11-13, and n. 4158.

All the hosts of wickedness collected together from history will have no power against Allah's Truth, or the Messenger of that Truth, or Allah's holy Plan for all His Creation.

... وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ بِرَسُولِهِمْ لِيَأْخُذُوهُ...

and every People plotted against their prophet, to seize him,

... وَجَادَلُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ...

and disputed by means of vanities, therewith to condemn the truth;

C4362. Whenever a great or vital Truth is proclaimed and renewed, there are always shallow minds that are ready to dispute about it! And what petty and vain arguments they advance! They think they can discredit or condemn the Truth in this way, or render "of none

effect" Allah's Plan. But they are mistaken. If they seem to succeed for a time, that is merely their trial. They may try to plan and plot against Allah's men. But their plots will fail in the long run. They will themselves be caught in their own snares. And then, how terrible will be their Punishment!

... فَأَخَذْتُهُمْ...

but it was I that seized them!

... فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ (٥)

And how (terrible), was My Requital!

C4363. Cf. 13:32.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

6. Thus was the Decree of thy Lord proved true against the Unbelievers;

C4364. Cf. 39:71.

The Decree, or Word of Allah, by which Evil was to be judged and condemned, was proved true against these men.

... أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ (٦)

that truly they are Companions of Fire!

They are **"Companions of the Fire"**: in other words, they are fit to live only in the environment of Evil!

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ...

7. Those who sustain the Throne (of Allah) and those around it

C4365. Cf. 39:75. (R).

... يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

sing Glory and Praise to their Lord;

believe in Him; and implore forgiveness for those who believe:

... رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا...

"Our Lord! Thy reach is over all things, in Mercy and Knowledge.

C4366. Cf. verse 3 above.

... فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (٧)

Forgive, then, those who turn in repentance, and follow Thy Path: and preserve them from the Penalty of the Blazing Fire!

رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي...

8. "And grant, our Lord! That they enter the Gardens of Eternity,

... وَعَدتَّهُم وَمَن صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ...

which Thou hast promised to them, and to the righteous among their fathers, their wives, and their posterity!

C4367. There is nothing selfish in prayer. We pray for all who are true and sincere. But just as Evil is catching, so Goodness is catching in another sense. The associates of the Good and those near and dear to them also share in their goodness and happiness, if only they try to walk in the same Way. And the Grace of Allah is working for all, all the time.

... إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٨)

For Thou art (He), the Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom.

وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّئَاتِ...

9. "And preserve them from (all) ills;

... وَمَن تَقِ السَّيِّئَاتِ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْتَهُ...

and any whom thou dost preserve from ills that Day -- on them wilt Thou have bestowed Mercy indeed:

C4368. That is the final Judgment, and any who is saved from the evil consequences of their deeds in this life will truly have been saved by Allah's Mercy, and for them it is the highest achievement they could have, the attainment of all their wishes, the fulfilment of their destiny and the noblest purpose of their Life, the supreme Salvation and Felicity.

... وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٩)

and that will be truly (for them) the highest Achievement.

C4369. Muslim Salvation, then, is more positive than mere safety from dangers or evils: it is the complete fulfilment of the noble destiny of man in the attainment of the fullest Grace.

Section 2

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنَادَوْنَ...

10. The Unbelievers will be addressed:

... لَمَقْتُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ مِن مَّقْتِكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ... ...

"Greater was the aversion of **Allah to you** than (is) your aversion to yourselves,

C4370. The Unbelievers having rejected Allah's Signs, they now see how they are shut out from Grace, and they feel disgusted with themselves.

How much greater was Allah's displeasure with them, when He showered mercy upon mercy on them and they yet rebelled!

How could they now hope for Grace!

... إِذْ تُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ فَتَكْفُرُونَ (١٠)

seeing that ye were called to the Faith and ye used to refuse."

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتَّنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَحْيَيْتَنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ...

11. They will say: "Our Lord! twice hast Thou **made** us without life, and twice hast Thou given us Life!

C4371. Cf. 2:28:

"How can ye reject the faith in Allah?-seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return."

Non-existence or existence as clay without life was equivalent to death. Then came true Life on this earth; then came physical death or the cessation of our physical life; and now at the Resurrection, is the second life.

... فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا...

Now have we recognized our sins:

... فَهَلْ إِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِّن سَبِيلٍ (١١)

is there any way out (of this)?"

ذَلِكُم بِأَنَّهُ إِذَا دُعِيَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ كَفَرْتُمْ...

12. (The answer will be:)

"This is because, when Allah was invoked as the only (object of worship), ye did reject Faith,

C4372. Cf. 39:45, and n. 4313.

When exclusive devotion is not rendered to Allah, there is no true understanding, in the mind of a creature, of his own true position, or of the working of the Divine Will and Purpose. How can he then hope to achieve the purpose of his life, or obtain Allah's Mercy, which is the only way to obtain release from the consequences of Sin?

... وَإِن يُشْرَكْ بِهِ تُؤْمِنُوا...

but when partners were joined to Him, ye believed!

... فَالْحُكْمُ لِلَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْكَبِيرِ (١٢)

The command is with Allah, Most High, Most Great!"

C4373. At the Judgment, the matter will have passed out of the stage at which further chances could have been hoped for. But in any case Allah is High above all things, Great above all that we can conceive of, both in Mercy and in Justice. The Decision will be with Him, and Him alone.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُنَزِّلُ لَكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ رِزْقًا...

13. He it is Who showeth you His Signs and sendeth down sustenance for you from the sky:

C4374. Lest it should be thought that Allah's Grace did not meet the Sinner again and again and offer Allah's Mercy again and again, it is pointed out that Allah's Signs were freely vouchsafed everywhere and

continuously, and that every kind of means was provided for man's **"Sustenance"** or growth and development, physical, mental, and spiritual. But only those could take advantage of it who turned their attention to Allah, who submitted their will to Him.

... وَمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ إِلَّا مَن يُنِيبُ (١٣)

but only those receive admonition who turn (to Allah).

فَادْعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ (١٤)

14. Call ye, then, upon Allah with sincere devotion to Him, even though the Unbelievers may detest it.

C4375. Cf. 9:33.

رَفِيعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ...

15. Raised high above ranks (or degrees), (He is) the Lord of the Throne (of authority):

C4376. He is raised far above any rank or degree which we can imagine.

It is possible also to treat **Rafi**, as equivalent to **Rafi**, meaning that He can raise His creatures to the highest ranks and degrees for He is the fountain of all honour.

... يُلْقِي الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ...

by his command doth He send the spirit (of inspiration) to any of His servants He pleases,

C4377. The choosing of a man to be the recipient of inspiration-to be the standard bearer of Allah's Truth-is the highest honour possible in the Kingdom of Allah. And Allah bestows that honour according to His own most perfect Will and Plan, which no one can question, for He is the fountain of all honour, dignity, and authority.

... لِيُنذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ (١٥)

that it may warn (men) of the Day of Mutual Meeting --

C4378. All men will meet together and meet their Lord at the Resurrection, no matter how far scattered they may have been in life or in death.

يَوْمَ هُم بَارِزُونَ...

16. The Day whereon they will (all) come forth:

... لَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ...

Not a single thing concerning them is hidden from Allah.

... لِّمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ...

Whose will be the dominion that Day?

C4379. The Kingdom of Allah-of Justice, Truth, and Righteousness-will then be fully established. Evil can then no more come into competition with Good, even in the subjective consciousness of man.

... لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ (١٦)

That of Allah, the One, the Irresistible!

الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ...

17. That Day will every soul be requited for what it earned;

... لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ ...

no injustice will there be that Day,

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (١٧)

for Allah is Swift in taking account.

C4380. Swift in several senses;

- the time of the present life or of the interval before Judgment. i.e., before the restoration of true values, is so short as compared to Eternity, that it may be counted as negligible: in the next verse the Day is characterized as "(ever) drawing near";
- in spite of the great concourse of souls to be judged, the process of Judgment will be almost instantaneous, "in the twinkling of an eye" (16:77), because everything is already known to Allah; and yet not the least injustice will be done.

وَأَنذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْآزِفَةِ إِذِ الْقُلُوبُ لَدَى الْحَنَاجِرِ كَاظِمِينَ...

18. Warn them of the Day that is (ever) drawing near, when the Hearts will (come) right up to the Throats to choke (them);

C4381. Hearts will come right up to the Throats to choke them:

an idiom implying that the whole of their life-functions will be choked up with terror.

But a more subtle meaning emerges from further analysis.

> The heart (or the breast) is the seat of affection, emotion, and every kind of feeling, such as terror, pain, despair, etc. These things will as it were overflow right up to the throat and choke it. The throat is the vehicle for the voice; their voice will be choked, and they will be able to say nothing. The throat is the channel for food, which goes to the stomach and maintains a healthy functioning of life; the choking means that the healthy functioning will stop, and there will be nothing but woe.

... مَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ يُطَاعُ (١٨)

no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to.

C4382. In that enforcement of personal responsibility, what sympathy or intercession can the wrong-doers get?

Is **Hamim** in any way connected with the Abbreviated letters Ha Mim attached to this Surah?

See Introduction.

يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ ...

19. (Allah) knows of (the tricks) that deceive with the eyes,

C4383. Men may be taken in by tricks that deceive with the eyes, but Allah's perfect knowledge penetrates through all mysteries.

"Deceive with the eyes" may mean several things;

- a sleight of hand (literally or figuratively) may deceive in respect of the eyes of beholders, for the things that they see do not actually happen;
- it may be the deceiver's own eyes that play false, because, for example, they show love when hatred is meant; or
- it may be that the eyes of the beholder play him false, in that he sees things that he should not see, and thus sins with his eyes.

... وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ (١٩)

and all that hearts (of men) conceal.

C4384. Here we come into the region of evil motives and thoughts which may be concealed in the hearts, breast, or mind, but which are all perfectly known to Allah.

...وَاللَّهُ يَقْضِي بِالْحَقِّ

20. And Allah will judge with (Justice and) Truth:

... وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ لَا يَقْضُونَ بِشَيْءٍ...

but those whom (men) invoke besides Him, will not (be in a position) to judge at all.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (٢٠)

Verily it is Allah (alone) Who hears and sees (all things).

C4385. If men build their hopes or their faith in anything except the Divine Grace, they will find themselves deserted. Any pretences that they make will be known to Allah. On the other hand every single good act, or word, or motive, or aspiration of their win, will reach Allah's Throne of Mercy.

C.207 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:21-50)

Travel in space and time, and you
Will see that Evil came to nothing
But evil. Mighty men of old
In arrogance plotted against Allah's Truth,
But were brought low. A humble Believer
In Pharaoh's Court stood up for Truth,
And counseled his People to obey the Right:
In earnest humility did he address them,
They heard him not. But he was saved,
And they were engulfed in the Wrath of Allah.

Section 3

أَوَ لَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ...

21. Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the End of those before them?

C4386. Cf. 30:9.

and several other similar passages.

... كَانُوا هُمْ أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَآثَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

They were even superior to them in strength, and in the traces (they have left) in the land:

C4387. See n. 3515 to 30:9.

We can learn from the history of previous nations. Many of them were more powerful, or have left finer and more imposing monuments and made a deeper impression on the world around them than any particular generation addressed. "Traces" in the text may be taken in that

extended sense. And yet all this did not save them from the consequences of their sins. They were called to account and punished. None of the power or pomp or skill of which they boasted could for a moment ward off the punishment when it came in God's good time.

... فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَاقٍ (٢١)

but Allah did call them to account for their sins, and none had they to defend them against Allah.

... ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانَت تَّأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَكَفَرُوا

22. That was because there came to them their messengers with Clear (Signs), but they rejected them:

C4388. But Allah in His Mercy always sends a Message of warning and good news through his messengers, and He gives His messengers Clear Signs and an authority that can be recognised.

Among the Clear Signs are:

- the pure and unselfish lives of the messengers;
- the revelation of truth which they bring;
- their influence on the course of events in their own and succeeding generations; etc. Some of these may be so remarkable that they merit the name of Miracles.

... فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ...

So Allah called them to account:

... إِنَّهُ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢٢)

for He is full of Strength, Strict in Punishment.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٣)

23. Of old We sent Moses, with Our Signs and Authority manifest,

C4389. This is not the story of Moses himself, so much as an introduction to the story of the one just man who believed, in the court of Pharaoh:

see verse 28 below. This Surah ("The Believer") is called after him.

إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَقَارُونَ ...

24. To Pharaoh, Haman, and Qarun;

C4390. Here are three types of Unfaith, each showing a different phase, and yet all united in opposition to the Truth and Mission of Moses.

- Pharaoh is the type of arrogance, cruelty, and reliance on brute force; cf. 28:38-39.
- Haman was Pharaoh's minister (n. 3331 to 28:6; also 28:38): he was the type of a sycophant who would pander to the vanity of any man in power.
- Qarun excelled in his wealth, was selfish in its use, and overbearing to the poor (28:76-81, and n. 3404).

They all came to an evil end eventually.

... فَقَالُوا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ (٢٤)

but they called (him) "a sorcerer telling lies!"...

فَلَمَّا جَاءهُم بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ عِندِنَا...

25. Now, when he came to them in Truth, from Us,

C4391. Verse 24 described the opposition of three types of Unfaith, which opposed Faith, in different ways, as described in the last note. Qarun, in his overweening insolence, may well have called Moses and Aaron "sorcerers telling lies" in the Sinai desert, as he despised priests and men of God, and might cast the Egyptian reproach in their teeth as a reminiscence.

Here, in verse 25, we have an episode about the time of the birth of Moses: **"them"** and **"they"** refer to Pharaoh and his Court; the **"coming"** of Moses here refers to the time of his birth.

On that construction, **"with him"**, lower down in their speech would be elliptical, referring to **"slay the sons"**,

as if they had said, "Kill all Israelite male children: the unknown Prophet to be born would be amongst them: so kill them all with him."

In verse 26 we again skip some years and recall an episode when Moses, having got his mission, stood in Pharaoh's Court, and some of the Egyptian Commonalty were almost ready to believe in him.

... قَالُوا اقْتُلُوا أَبْنَاء الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ وَاسْتَحْيُوا نِسَاءهُمْ...

they said, "Slay the sons of those who believe with him, and keep alive their females,"

C4392. That is, the Israelites, for they were the custodians of Allah's Faith then. For the slaughter of Israelite children by Pharaoh, see 28:4-6, and notes.

... وَمَا كَيْدُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ (٢٥)

but the plots of Unbelievers (end) in nothing but errors (and delusions)!"...

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُونِي أَقْتُلْ مُوسَى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهُ...

26. Said Pharaoh:

"Leave me to slay Moses; and let him Call on his Lord!

C4393. This is an episode that occurs when Moses, invested with his mission, confronts Pharaoh in his Court and preaches to him:

see 20:49 and following verses; also 20:57,63.

... إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَن يُبَدِّلَ دِينَكُمْ أَوْ أَن يُظْهِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ (٢٦)

What I fear is lest he should change your **religion**, or lest he should cause mischief to appear in the land!"

C4394. Some of Pharaoh's people did afterwards give up the worship of Pharaoh and of the Egyptian gods and believed "in the Lord of Aaron and Moses" and in fact suffered martyrdom for the Faith of Unity: 20:70-73.

وَقَالَ مُوسَى إِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُم...

27. Moses said:

"I have indeed called upon my Lord and your Lord

C4395. The whole point of the Gospel of Unity which Moses preached was that the God of Moses and the God of Pharaoh, of Israel and Egypt, the Lord of all the Worlds, was One,-Allah, the only True God.

See 20:49-50 and notes 2572 and 2573.

... مِّن كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٢٧)

(for protection) from every arrogant one who believes not in the Day of Account!"

Section 4

وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إِيمَانَهُ...

28. A believer, **a man** from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said:

C4396. There is nothing to justify the identification of this man with the man mentioned in 28:20, who warned Moses long before Moses had received his mission. On the contrary, in this passage, the man is evidently speaking after Moses had received his mission, preached to Pharaoh, and got a certain amount of success, for which Pharaoh and his people were trying, to seek his life. Moses had evidently already brought his Clear Signs.

... أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَن يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَقَدْ جَاءكُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ...

"Will ye slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah'? -- when he has indeed come to you with Clear (Signs) from your Lord?

... وَإِن يَكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهُ...

And if he be a liar on him is (the sin of) his lie:

... وَإِن يَكُ صَادِقًا يُصِبْكُم بَعْضُ الَّذِي يَعِدُكُمْ...

but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the (calamity) of which he warns you:

C4397. A commonsense view is put before them by an Egyptian who loves his own people and does not wish them to perish in sin. "Will you kill this man for calling on Allah?

Have you not seen his character and behaviour? Do you not see the 'Clear Signs' about him that bespeak his credentials?

Suppose for a moment that he is a liar and pretender: he will suffer for his falsehood, but why should you turn against Allah? But suppose that he is really inspired by Allah to tell you the truth and warn you against evil, what will be your fate when Allah's Wrath descends? For it must descend if he is a true Messenger sent by Allah."

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ (٢٨)

truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies!

C4398. This is with reference to the "Clear signs". 'They are Signs of Allah's guidance, for Allah would never guide a man who exceeds the bounds of truth and tells you lies! Such a man is bound to be found out!'

يَا قَوْمِ لَكُمُ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ظَاهِرِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ..

29. "O my people!

yours is the dominion this day: ye have the upper hand in the land:

C4399. 'Do not be puffed up with arrogance because the power is in your hands at present! Do you deserve it?

Will it last?

If you are sinning and drawing upon yourselves Allah's Punishment, is there anything that can shield you from it?'

... فَمَن يَنصُرُنَا مِن بَأْسِ اللَّهِ إِنْ جَاءنَا...

but who will help us from the Punishment of Allah, should it befall us?"

... قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَا أُرِيكُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَرَى...

Pharaoh said:

"I but point out to you that which I see (myself);

C4400. Pharaoh's egotism and arrogance come out. 'I can see and understand everything. As I see things, so

do I direct you. The Path which I see must be right, and you must follow it.'

... وَمَا أَهْدِيكُمْ إِلَّا سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ (٢٩)

nor do I guide you but to the Path of Right!"

وَقَالَ الَّذِي آمَنَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُم مِّثْلَ يَوْمِ الْأَحْزَابِ (٣٠)

30. Then said the man who believed:

"O my People! truly I do fear for you something **like** the Day (of disaster) of the **Confederates** (in sin)! --

C4401. He appeals to past history.

"Have you not heard of people who lived before you?-like the generations of Noah, the 'Ad, the Thamud, and many more-who held together in sin against Allah's Preachers, but were wiped out for their sins?"

C4402. Cf. 38:11-13, and n. 4158,

also 40:5, and n. 4361.

مِثْلَ دَأْبِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ...

31. "Something like the fate of the people of Noah, the 'Ad, and the Thamud, and those who came after them:

... وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعِبَادِ (٣١)

but Allah never wishes injustice to His Servants.

C4403. 'All these disasters happened in history, and they will happen again to you if you do not give up evil. Do not for a moment think that Allah is unjust. It is you who are deliberately preparing the disasters by your conduct.'

وَيَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ (٣٢)

32. "And, O my People!

I fear for you a **Day** when there will be mutual calling (and wailing).

C4404. This Day may refer to the Day of Judgment, of which three features are here referred to.

- People may wail and call to each other, but no one can help another: each one will have his own judgment to face;
- the wicked will then be driven to Hell from the Judgment-Seat; and
- there will be no one to help, guide, or intercede, because the grace and guidance of Allah had already been rejected.

But the words are perfectly general, and are applicable to all stages at which the Wrath of Allah is manifest.

يَوْمَ تُوَلُّونَ مُدْبِرِينَ مَا لَكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ...

32. "And, O my People!

I fear for you a Day when there will be mutual calling (and wailing).

... وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٣٣)

any whom Allah leaves to stray, there is none to guide...

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ يُوسُفُ مِن قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ...

34. "And to you there came Joseph in times gone by, with Clear Signs,

C4405. So far he has been speaking of general religious tradition. Now, as an Egyptian, addressing Egyptians, he refers to the mission of Joseph in Egypt, for which see the whole of Surah 12.

Joseph was not born in Egypt, nor was he an Egyptian. With what wonderful incidents he came into Egypt! What difficulties did he not surmount among his own brothers first, and in the Egyptian family which afterwards adopted him! How injustice, spite, and forgetfulness on the part of others, yet wove a spell round him and made him a ruler and saviour of Egypt in times of famine!

How he preached to prisoners in prison, the wife of 'Aziz in her household, to the Egyptian ladies in their banquet, and to the Court of Pharaoh generally. The Egyptians profited by the material gains which came to them

through him, but as a nation remained skeptical of his spiritual truths for many generations after him.

... فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا جَاءكُم بِهِ...

but ye ceased not to doubt of the (mission) for which he had come:

... حَتَّى إِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا...

at length, when he died, ye said: 'No messenger will Allah send after him.'

C4406. See Appendix IV for a discussion of the interval between Joseph and Moses. Perhaps the interval was about one to three centuries, a very short period for the memory of a learned nation like the Egyptians.

And yet they as a nation ignored his spiritual work, and afterwards even persecuted Israel in Egypt until Moses delivered them. They actually saw the benefits conferred by Joseph, but did not realise that Allah's Kingdom works continuously even though men ignore it.

See Appendix V; for a sketch of Religion in Egypt.

For such men how could the Grace and Guidance of Allah be effective in their hearts?

... كَذَٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُّرْتَابٌ (٣٤)

Thus doth Allah leave to stray such as transgress and live in doubt

الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ...

35. "(Such) as dispute about the Signs of Allah, without any authority that hath reached them.

... كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِندَ اللَّهِ وَعِندَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

Grievous and odious (is such conduct) in the sight of Allah and of the Believers.

... كَذَٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ (٣٥)

Thus doth Allah **seal up every heart** -- of arrogant and obstinate transgressors."

C4407. See the last note.

The arrogant transgressors having closed their hearts to the Message of Allah and to every appeal made to them, it followed by Allah's Law that their hearts were sealed up to any fresh influences for good.

Cf. 7:100; also 2:7, and n. 31.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا هَامَانُ ابْنِ لِي صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّي أَبْلُغُ الْأَسْبَابَ (٣٦)

36. Pharaoh said:

"O Haman! Build me a lofty **palace**, that I may attain the ways and means --

C4408. Cf. 28:38, and n. 3371.

There arc two points to be noted here.

1. Pharaoh, in the arrogance of his materialism, thinks of the Kingdom of Heaven like a kingdom on earth; he thinks of spiritual things in terms of palaces and ladders: notice that the word **asbab** (ways and means) is emphasised by repetition
2. His sarcasm turns Moses and Allah to ridicule, and he frankly states that 'for his part he thinks Moses is a liar', though other men less lofty than he (Pharaoh) may he deceived by the Clear Signs of Moses.

أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاوَاتِ فَأَطَّلِعَ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى...

37. "The ways and means of (reaching) the heavens, and that I may mount up to the Allah of Moses;

... وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ كَاذِبًا...

but as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!"

... وَكَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَصُدَّ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ...

Thus was made **alluring**, in Pharaoh's eyes, the evil of his deeds, and he was hindered from the Path;

C4409. Pharaoh's speech shows how his own egotism and haughty arrogance brought him to this pass, that even the evil which he did seemed alluring in his own eyes!

His heart was indeed sealed, and his arrogance prevented him from seeing the right path.

(With the Kufi Qiraat I read **sudda** in the passive voice).

... وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ إِلَّا فِي تَبَابٍ (٣٧)

and the **plot** of Pharaoh led to nothing but perdition (for him).

C4410. Pharaoh had plotted to slay Moses (40:26) and to kill the Children of Israel (40:25).

The plot recoiled on his own head and on the head of his people who joined in the plot; for they were all drowned in the Red Sea.

Section 5

وَقَالَ الَّذِي آمَنَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُونِ أَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ (٣٨)

38. The man who believed said further:

"O my People! follow me: I will lead you to the Path of Right.

C4411. Note the contrast between the earnest beseeching tone of the Believer here and the hectoring tone of Pharaoh in using similar words in 40:29 above.

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ...

39. "O my people!

This life of the present is nothing but (temporary) convenience:

... وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ (٣٩)

it is the Hereafter that is the Home that will last.

C4412. Faith makes him see the contrast between vanities, even though they may glitter temporarily, and the eternal Good that is destined for man.

مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا...

40. "He that works evil will not be requited but by the like thereof:

... وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ...

and he that works a righteous deed -- whether man or woman -- and is a believer --

... فَأُوْلَئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُونَ فِيهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٤٠)

such will enter the Garden (of Bliss):

therein will they have **abundance** without measure.

C4413. Cf. 2:212.

This sustenance will not only last. It will be a most liberal reward, far above any merits of the recipient.

وَيَا قَوْمِ مَا لِي...

41. "And O my People! how (strange) it is for me

C4414. It may seem strange according to the laws of this world that he should be seeking their Good while they are seeking his damnation! But that is the merit of Faith. Its mission is to rescue its enemies and Allah's enemies, as far as their will will consent!

... أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى النَّجَاةِ وَتَدْعُونَنِي إِلَى النَّارِ (٤١)

to call you to Salvation while ye call me to the Fire!

تَدْعُونَنِي لِأَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَأُشْرِكَ بِهِ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

42. "Ye do call upon me to **blaspheme against Allah**, and to join with Him Partners of whom I have no knowledge;

C4415. The worship of Pharaoh was **blasphemy**, but it had many sides, including the worship of heroes, animals, powers of good and evil in nature, and idols of all kinds.

It is this comprehensive cult which required warnings again and again, but Allah is Exalted in Power, and gives such forgiveness on repentance.

... وَأَنَا أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى الْعَزِيزِ الْغَفَّارِ (٤٢)

and I call you to the Exalted in Power, Who forgives again and again!"

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّمَا تَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَعْوَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ...

43. "Without doubt ye do call me to one who is not fit to be called to, whether in this world, or in the Hereafter;

C4416. Faith is not content with its own inner vision and conviction. It can give ample arguments. Three are mentioned here:

1. nothing but Allah is worthy of worship, either in this world of sense or in the next world;
2. our Return will be to Allah, the Eternal Reality; and
3. the worship of Falsehood must necessarily lead to the Penalty of Falsehood, unless Allah's Mercy intervenes and forgives on our sincere repentance. (R).

... وَأَنَّ مَرَدَّنَا إِلَى اللَّهِ...

our Return will be to Allah;

... وَأَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ هُمْ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ (٤٣)

and the Transgressors will be Companions of the Fire!

فَسَتَذْكُرُونَ مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ...

44. "Soon will ye remember what I say to you (now),

C4417. The next verse shows his thought to the last is with his People. 'No matter what you do to me: you will have cause to remember my admonition, when perhaps it is too late for you to repent. For my part I commit myself to the care of Allah, and my Faith tells me that all will be right.'

... وَأُفَوِّضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ...

my (own) affair I commit to Allah:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (٤٤)

for Allah (ever) watches over His Servants."

فَوَقَاهُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِ مَا مَكَرُوا...

45. Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him),

... وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ (٤٥)

but the brunt of the **Penalty** encompassed on all sides the People of Pharaoh.

C4418. The Pharaoh of the time of Moses, and his people, suffered many calamities in this world: 7:130-136.

But those were nothing to the Penalties mentioned in the next verse.

النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا...

46. In front of the Fire will they be brought, morning and evening:

C4419. When the Judgment really comes, it is not like an ordinary physical disaster. The Fire of Punishment is ever present-morning and evening- i.e. at all times. The sentence becomes final and there is no mitigation.

... وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ (٤٦)

and (the Sentence will be) on the Day that Judgment will be established:

"Cast ye the People of Pharaoh into the severest Penalty!"

وَإِذْ يَتَحَاجُّونَ فِي النَّارِ ...

47. Behold, they will dispute with each other in the Fire!

C4420. Just as Unity, Harmony, and Peace are indications of Truth, Bliss, and Salvation, so Reproaches, Disputes, and Disorders are indications of Hell.

... فَيَقُولُ الضُّعَفَاء لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا...

The weak ones (who followed) will say to those who had been arrogant,

...إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّغْنُونَ عَنَّا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ النَّارِ (٤٧)

"We but followed you:

can ye then take (on yourselves) from us some share of the Fire?"

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُلٌّ فِيهَا...

48. Those who had been arrogant will say:

"We are all in this (Fire)!

C4421. Note the evasion and cynicism of the answer, befitting the character of spiritual misleaders!

'What! are we not suffering with you in the same Fire! Pray to Allah if you like! He has pronounced His Judgment!'

Cf. 14:21-22.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ حَكَمَ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ (٤٨)

Truly, Allah has judged between (His) Servants!"

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ...

49. Those in the Fire will say to the Keepers of Hell:

C4422. Cf. 39:71.

The poor misguided ones will turn to the angels who are their Keepers, asking them to pray and intercede for them. But the angels are set there to watch over them, not to intercede for them. In their innocence they ask, 'Did you have no warnings from messengers, men like yourselves, in your past life?'

ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ (٤٩)

"Pray to your Lord to lighten us the Penalty for a Day (at least)!"

قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ تَكُ تَأْتِيكُمْ رُسُلُكُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ...

50. They will say: "Did there not come to you your messengers with Clear Signs?"

... قَالُوا بَلَى...

They will say, "Yes."

... قَالُوا فَادْعُوا...

They will reply, "Then pray (as ye like)

C4423. The answer being in the affirmative, they will have to tell the dreadful truth:

'This is neither the time nor the place for prayer, for mercy! And in any case, Prayer without Faith is Delusion, and must miss its mark.'

Cf. 13:14.

... وَمَا دُعَاء الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ (٥٠)

but the Prayer of those without Faith is nothing but (futile wandering) in (mazes of) error!"

C.208 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:51-85)

Allah's grace and help are ever ready
For His servants who patiently persevere,
Let not arrogance blind the souls
Of men; the Hour of Judgement is bound
To come. The keys of Life and Death
Are in the hands of Allah. Dispute not
The Signs of Allah, but learn from History
And the world around you. Science and skill
Avail you not if the soul is dead.

Section 6

إِنَّا لَنَنصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

51. We will, without doubt, help Our messengers and those who believe (both) in this world's life

... وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ (٥١)

and on the Day when the Witnesses will stand forth --

C4424. The Day of Judgment is described as "the Day when Witnesses will stand forth". This description implies two things:

- that there man will be judged justly; his past actions and his faculties and opportunities will be witnesses as to the use he made of them (24:24); in fact he will himself be a witness against himself (6:130);

- and the prophets and just men will bear witness to the fact that they preached and warned men (39:69; 2:133).

يَوْمَ لَا يَنفَعُ الظَّالِمِينَ مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ...

52. The Day when no profit will it be to Wrongdoers to present their excuses,

C4425. After the testimony mentioned in the last note, there will be no room for excuses, and if any were made, they could serve no purpose, unlike the state of matters in this world, where there is much make-believe, and Falsehood often masquerades as Truth and is accepted as such even by those who should know better.

... وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ (٥٢)

but they will (only) have the Curse and the Home of Misery.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْهُدَى...

53. We did aforetime give Moses the (Book of) Guidance,

C4426. Moses was given a Revelation, and it was given in heritage to the Children of Israel, to preserve it, guide their conduct by it, and hold aloft its Message: but they failed in all these particulars.

... وَأَوْرَثْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ (٥٣)

and We gave the Book in inheritance to the Children of Israel --

هُدًى وَذِكْرَى لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٥٤)

54. A Guide and a Message to men of understanding.

... فَاصْبِرْ

55. Patiently, then, persevere:

C4427. The Israelites corrupted or lost their Book; they disobeyed Allah's Law; and failed to proclaim and exemplify Allah's Message. That is why the new Revelation came to the holy Prophet.

If, in the beginning, it was rejected and persecuted, there was no cause for discouragement; on the contrary, there was all the greater need for patience and perseverance.

... إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

for the Promise of Allah is true:

... وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ...

and ask forgiveness for thy fault,

C4428. Every mortal according to his nature and degree of spiritual enlightenment falls short of the perfect standard of Allah (16:61), and should therefore ask Allah for forgiveness.

What is merit in an ordinary man may be a human shortcoming in one nearest to Allah: see 38:24-25, and notes 4175-76. Prophets have a further responsibility for their People or their Ummah, and they ask in a representative capacity.

... وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ (٥٥)

and celebrate the Praises of thy Lord in the evening and in the morning.

C4429. Cf. i3:41. Evening and morning are the best times for contemplation and prayer. But the phrase **"evening and morning"** may mean "at all times". (R).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ...

56. Those who dispute about the Signs of Allah without any authority bestowed on them --

... إِن فِي صُدُورِهِمْ إِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُم بِبَالِغِيهِ ...

there **is** nothing in their breasts but (the quest of) greatness, which they shall never attain to:

C4430. The Disputes are actuated by nothing but the desire for self-glory and self-aggrandizement. Their desire is not likely to receive fruition, but others should take warning from it.

... فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ...

seek refuge, then, in Allah:

... إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (٥٦)

it is He Who hears and sees (all things).

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ...

57. Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater (matter) than the creation of men:

C4431. The heavens and the earth include mankind and all other creatures and millions of stars. Man is himself but a tiny part of creation. Why should he be so ego-centric?

The whole is greater than a tiny part of it. And Allah Who created the whole of the Worlds is able to do much more wonderful things than can enter the imagination of man. Why should man be arrogant and doubt the Resurrection, and take upon himself to doubt the possibility of Allah's Revelation? It is only because he has made himself blind.

See next verse.

... وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٧)

Yet most men understand not.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ...

58. Not equal are the blind and those who (clearly) see:

C4432. The man of Faith who backs his faith by righteous conduct is like the man of clear vision, who sees things in their true perspective and walks with firm steps in the Way of Allah.

The man who does evil is like a blind man: the Light of Allah is all around him, but he is blind, and he can see nothing. He has rejected Faith and cannot even learn by other people's admonition.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيءُ...

nor are (equal) those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and those who do evil.

... قَلِيلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٥٨)

Little do ye learn by admonition!

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهَا...

59. The Hour will certainly come:

therein is no doubt:

C4433. "The Hour" is the crown and consummation of man's life on this earth,-the gateway to the Hereafter.

... وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٩)

yet most men believe not.

Section 7

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ...

60. And your Lord says:

"Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer):

C4434. As this life is not the end of all things, and we are to have its fulfilment in the Hereafter: we have only to pray to the Lord of the Present and the Hereafter, and He will hear us, forgive us, guide us, and make our Path smooth.

But Pride will have its fall,-and its humiliating Punishment: Cf. 37:18.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ (٦٠)

But those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell -- in humiliation!"

اللَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا...

61. It is Allah Who has made the Night for you, that ye may rest therein, and the Day, as that which helps (you) to see.

C4435. The succession of Day and Night in our physical life is frequently appealed to, as a symbol to draw our attention to the Mercy and Bounty of Allah. If we viewed these things aright, we should serve Allah and seek Light from Him and Rest from Him, and celebrate His praises with gratitude.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٦١)

Verily Allah is Full of Grace and Bounty to men:

yet most men give no thanks.

ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

62. Such is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things,

... لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ...

there is no god but He:

... فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ (٦٢)

then how ye are deluded away from the Truth!

C4436. If we worship false gods, i.e., go after vanities, what is it that **deludes** us and leads us astray?

What could it be but our rank ingratitude and failure to use the understanding which Allah has given us?

كَذَلِكَ يُؤْفَكُ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ (٦٣)

63. Thus are deluded those who are wont to reject the Signs of Allah.

C4437. See the last two notes.

If men are deluded by Falsehoods, it is because they reject Revelation and refuse to learn from the Signs of Allah all around them.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي ...

64. It is Allah Who **has**

C4438. The argument in the last two verses was from man's personal experiences of his physical life.

In this and the next verse a parallel argument is addressed to man on a much higher plane: 'look at the spacious earth and the canopy of the sky; look at the special position you occupy above other animals that you know, in shape and form, and moral and spiritual capacities; consider your refinements in food and fruits and the higher spiritual Sustenance of which your physical food is a type; would you not indeed say that the Lord is good, and would you not glorify His holy name?'

... جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا ...

made for you the earth as a resting place,

C4439. A resting place: I understand this to imply a temporary place of rest or sojourn, a period of probation, to be followed by the eternal Home.

... وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً ...

and the sky as a canopy,

... وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ...

and has given you shapes -- and made your shapes beautiful --

C4440. Cf. 7:11 and n. 996.

The shape and form refer to the physical form as well as to the inborn moral and spiritual capacities of man.

As regards physical form, Cf. Milton's description of Adam and Eve,

> "Two of far noble shape, erect and tall" (Paradise Lost, iv. 288).

As regards moral and spiritual capacities, they are typified by the breathing of Allah's spirit into man: 15:29.

... وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ...

and has provided for you Sustenance, of things pure and good --

C4441. "Sustenance": all that is necessary for growth and development, physical, moral, and spiritual.

Cf. n. 2105 to 16:73.

... ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ...

such is Allah your Lord.

... فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٤)

So Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

... هُوَ الْحَيُّ

65. He is the living (One):

C4442. The real, self-subsisting Life is only in Him:

Cf. 2:255, and n. 296.

All other forms of life are but shadows compared to His perfect Light.

... لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ...

There is no god but He:

Call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion.

... الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٥)

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds!

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

66. Say:

"I have been forbidden to invoke those whom ye invoke besides Allah,

C4443. All objects of worship besides Allah are mere delusions. To any one who sees this clearly, through Allah's Self-revelations, the only possible course is to give up everything else, which his own inner experience as well as outer Revelation tell him is false or of a temporary nature, and to bring his own will and actions into complete unison with Allah's Will: for that is the meaning of Islam, bowing to the Will of Allah.

When we bow to the Real and Everlasting, we are automatically saved from failing victims to the False and Evanescent. (R).

... لَمَّا جَاءنِيَ الْبَيِّنَاتُ مِن رَّبِّي وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٦)

seeing that the Clear Signs have come to me from my Lord: and I have been commanded to bow (in Islam) to the Lord of the Worlds."

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن تُرَابٍ...

67. It is He Who has created you from dust,

C4444. Cf. this passage with 22:5 and notes 2773 and 2774.

The various stages of man's physical life are:

- first, simple matter (dust);
- the sperm-drop in the father;
- the fertilised ovum in the mother's womb;
- out into the light, as a human child;
- youth and full maturity;
- decay; and
- death.

In some cases the later stages are curtailed or cut off; but in any case, a Term appointed is reached, so that the higher purpose of Allah's Will and Plan may be fulfilled in each given case, that man "may learn wisdom".

... ثُمَّ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ...

then from a sperm-drop,

... ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ...

then from a leech-like clot;

... ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا...

then does He get you out (into the light) as a child:

... ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ...

then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength;

... ثُمَّ لِتَكُونُوا شُيُوخًا...

then lets you become old,

... وَمِنكُم مَّن يُتَوَفَّى مِن قَبْلُ...

though of you there are some who die before;

... وَلِتَبْلُغُوا أَجَلًا مُّسَمًّى...

and lets you reach a Term appointed:

... وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٧)

in order that ye may learn wisdom.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ...

68. It is He Who gives Life and Death;

C4445. The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. But He is not dependent on time or place or instruments or materials. All that He has to do is to say "Be", and it comes into existence.

Cf. 16:40, and n. 2066; 36:82, and n. 4029.

Conversely, His Will or Command is sufficient to annihilate Existence into Non-Existence (Life into Death) or determine the limits or conditions of Existence or Non-Existence.

... فَإِذَا قَضَى أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ...

and when He decides upon an affair, He says to it,

... كُن فَيَكُونُ (٦٨)

"Be," and it is.

Section 8

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ أَنَّى يُصْرَفُونَ (٦٩)

69. Seest thou not those that dispute concerning the signs of Allah? How are they turned away (from Reality)? --

C4446. Those who dispute about the Signs of Allah which are clear to all who care to see, are merely in the mists of Unreality:

Cf. 10:32.

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَبِمَا أَرْسَلْنَا بِهِ رُسُلَنَا...

70. Those who reject the Book and the (revelations) with which We sent Our messengers:

C4447. "The Book" may refer to the Holy Quran or to the fundamental, Revelation the "Mother of the Book" (13:39), while the Books revealed to the messengers are the definite Revelations that came down to men from time to time.

... فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٠)

But soon shall they know --

إِذِ الْأَغْلَالُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَالسَّلَاسِلُ يُسْحَبُونَ (٧١)

71. When the yokes (shall be) round their necks, and the chains; they shall be dragged along --

C4448. The rejection of Allah's Message, however brought, carries its own penalty. The **yoke** of slavery to Sin and Evil is fastened more and more firmly round the rejecter's neck, because there is no one to safeguard his freedom, and the chains of superstitions and the ugly consequences of evil restrict his freedom and the limited faculty of choice which was given by Allah to man.

This process receives its climax at the Hour of Judgment.

فِي الْحَمِيمِ...

72. In the boiling fetid fluid;

C4449. The sinner gets dragged further and further in the disgusting consequences of his evil actions, until the fire of destruction closes in upon him.

... ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُونَ (٧٢)

then in the Fire shall they be burned;

ثُمَّ قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ (٧٣)

73. Then shall it be said to them: "Where are the (deities) to which ye gave part-worship --

مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

74. "In derogation of Allah?"

... قَالُوا ضَلُّوا عَنَّا...

They will reply: "They have left us in the lurch:

C4450. All falsehoods will vanish: Cf. 7:36.

The only Reality will be fully manifest even to those to whom Evil was made to seem alluring in the lower life. They will feel in their inmost souls that they had been pursuing mere shadows, things of no real existence. This was the result of their rejecting the Light and the Grace of Allah: they got entangled in the mazes of error.

... بَل لَّمْ نَكُن نَّدْعُو مِن قَبْلُ شَيْئًا ...

nay, we invoked not, of old, anything (that had real existence)."

... كَذَٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤)

Thus does Allah leave the Unbelievers to stray.

ذَٰلِكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ...

75. "That was **because** ye were wont to rejoice on the earth in things other than the Truth,

C4451. Allah does not withdraw His grace from any unless,

- they actively and deliberately take a delight in things that are vain or false, and
- they insolently reject the things that are truer-in other words, unless men are deliberately false to their own fights, as illuminated by the Light of Allah.

... وَبِمَا كُنتُمْ تَمْرَحُونَ (٧٥)

and that ye were wont to be insolent.

ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

76. "Enter ye the gates of Hell, to dwell therein:

C4452. Cf. 39:72.

... فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٧٦)

and evil is (this) abode of the arrogant!"

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

77. So persevere in patience! For the Promise of Allah is true:

فَإِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ...

and **whether** We show thee (in this life) some part of what We promise them, or We take thy soul (to Our Mercy) (Before that),

C4453. Cf. 10;46, and n. 1438.

As the eventual justice and readjustment of values must take place, when every soul returns to the Judgment-Seat of Allah, it makes no difference if good and evil meet their deserts in this very life or not.

Cf. also 13:40.

... فَإِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُونَ (٧٧)

(in any case) it is to Us that they shall (all) return.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُم...

78. We did aforetime send messengers before thee:

... مِّنْ قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُم مَّن لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ...

of them there are some whose story We have related to thee, and some whose story We have not related to thee.

C4454. Cf. 4:164.

Allah sent Messengers of His Truth to every people. There are some whose names are known to us through the Holy Quran, but there are a large number whose names are not made known to us through that medium. We must recognise the Truth wherever we find it.

... وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

It was not (possible) for any messenger to bring a Sign except by the leave of Allah:

... فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (٧٨)

but when the Command of Allah issued, the matter was decided in truth and justice, and there perished, there and then, those who stood on Falsehoods.

C4455. The Signs of Allah are everywhere, and can be seen by the discerning eye at all times. But if any extraordinary Signs are demanded by cynics or Unbelievers, they will not be granted merely because they are demanded.

It is Allah's Will that issues them, not merely the desire of human beings, even if he be a Messenger of Allah.

But when an extraordinary Sign does issue by the Command of Allah, it means that the cup of the iniquitous is full; that their case is decided, and their time of respite is past; and that Justice takes the place of Mercy, and evil is blotted out.

Section 9

اللَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْعَامَ لِتَرْكَبُوا مِنْهَا وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٧٩)

79. It is Allah Who made cattle for you, that ye may use some for riding and some for food;

C4456. Cf. 16:5-8.

The fact that beasts, which in their wild state are so noxious, are, when domesticated, so useful to man, is itself one of the great and standing Signs of Allah's care for man.

The great usefulness of cattle is very instructive. They serve for riding, and many of them for food; further, they are used for the plough, and they produce milk, or wool, or hair; and from their carcasses man derives bones and horns for many industrial uses; but passing on to higher aspects of life, they further social, moral,

and spiritual uses as drought-animals, in that transport serves one of the fundamental purposes of civilisation, being in this respect like ships for international commerce: 30:46, and n. 3565.

It is by means of human intercourse through transport that we can carry out the highest needs of our culture, "any need there may be in our hearts", i.e., in our inner being.

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوا عَلَيْهَا حَاجَةً فِي صُدُورِكُمْ...

80. And there are (other) advantages in them for you (besides);

that ye may through them attain to any need (there may be) in your hearts;

... وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ (٨٠)

and on them and on ships ye are carried.

وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ...

81. And He shows you always His Signs;

C4457. The Signs of Allah's goodness and mercy are so numerous that it is impossible to enumerate them. Which of them can any mortal deny?

This is the theme of that highly poetical Surah Rahman (55).

... فَأَيَّ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ تُنكِرُونَ (٨١)

then which of the Signs of Allah will ye deny?

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ...

82. Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before them?

... كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَآثَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

They were more numerous than these and superior in strength and in the traces (they have left) in the land:

C4458. Cf. 9:69.

For any generation to take inordinate pride in its own single achievements in science or skill becomes ridiculous if we consider the broad stream of history.

- In the first place, men will find that a great deal of what they attribute to their own merits only became possible owing to the earlier work of their predecessors.
- Secondly, many of-their predecessors were more numerous and mightier in power than they, although the perspective of time may have reduced the apparent depth of their influence, and the monuments which they have left behind may have suffered from the destroying hand of Time.
- Thirdly, and most important of all, when they forgot Allah and His inexorable Law, nothing of their own handiwork profited them: they perished in the common ruin as all vanities must perish.

Cf. also 40:21 above, and n. 4387.

See how the recapitulation rounds off the argument.

... فَمَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٨٢)

yet all that they accomplished was of no profit to them.

...فَلَمَّا جَاءتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِندَهُم مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ

83. For when their messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they exulted in such knowledge (and skill) as they had;

C4459. Arrogance and an exaggerated idea of Self were at the bottom of the Evil to which they succumbed.

... وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُون (٨٣)

but that very (Wrath) at which they were wont to scoff hemmed them in.

C4460. Cf. 16:34.

Nothing could stop Justice of Allah punishing Evil. What they had ridiculed came as an inexorable fact. None of their grandeur or art or science or skill was of any use when they lost their souls!

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْا بَأْسَنَا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَحْدَهُ...

84. But when they saw Our punishment, they said:
"We believe in Allah -- the One Allah --

... وَكَفَرْنَا بِمَا كُنَّا بِهِ مُشْرِكِينَ (٨٤)

and we reject the partners we used to join with Him."

فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنفَعُهُمْ إِيمَانُهُمْ لَمَّا رَأَوْا بَأْسَنَا...

85. But their professing the Faith when they (actually) saw Our Punishment was not going to profit them.

C4461. Again and again were they given chances, and again and again did they reject them. When it was too late, and in fact when it had no meaning, they offered to profess Faith. That was of no use.

Allah does not accept unmeaning things of that kind. He wants to train and purify our will. For their disobedience and rebellion they perished utterly.

... سُنَّتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ فِي عِبَادِهِ...

(Such has been) Allah's way of dealing with His servants (from the most ancient times).

... وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨٥)

And even thus did the rejecters of Allah perish (utterly)!

وَإِمَّا يَنزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ

And if (at any time) an incitement to discord is made to thee by the Evil One, seek refuge in Allah.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Fussilat

فُصِّلَتْ

Introduction and Summary

This is the second of the series of seven Surahs bearing the Abbreviated Letters *Ha Mim*, as explained in the Introduction to Surah 40. To prevent confusion with other Surahs of the *Ha Mim* series, the word *Sajdah* is sometimes added to the title, making it *Ha Mim al Sajdah*, the double title being necessary as there is another Surah called *Sajdah* (Surah 32). To avoid the double title it is sometimes called Fussilat, from the occurrence of the word in verse 3.

The meaning of *Ha Mim* has been explained in the Introduction to Surah 40, where will also be found a note on the chronology and general theme of the seven *Ha Mim* Surahs.

For this particular Surah the theme is that the basis of Faith and Revelation is Allah's Power and Goodness, and the fruit of both in man's righteousness and healing.

Summary- What is Revelation and faith, and what is man's attitude to both, and what are its consequences? (41:1-32, and C.209).

The fruits of Faith and Unfaith, truth and Falsehood, (41:3:54, C.210).

C.209 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(41:1-32)

Revelation explains, and makes things clear;
It gives the message of hope and mercy,
And it warns men against the snares
Of Evil. Deny not Allah, the Lord
Of the Worlds, Whose glory and power
Are shown in Creation, and His Mercy
in Revelation. Learn from the fate
Of the People of old! Learn from the warnings
Of your own nature: your very limbs
And faculties, if misused, bear witness
Against you. Repent ere it be too late.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim.

C4462. Abbreviated Letters: see Introduction to Surah 40.

See also n.4382 to 40:18, and n. 4505 to 41:34.

تَنزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٢)

2. A revelation from (Allah), Most Gracious, Most Merciful --

C4463. In the last Surah (40:2-3) the revelation was described with reference to some of the qualities of Allah from Whom it came.

Here it is described mainly with reference to its subject-matter.

1. It brings the Message of Grace and Mercy;
2. it is not merely a book of Dark Sayings, but everything is explained clearly and from various points of view;
3. it is in Arabic, the language of the people among whom it was first promulgated, and therefore easily intelligible to them if they take the trouble to understand; and
4. it opens the way to Forgiveness through Repentance and gives warning of all spiritual Dangers.

كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣)

3. A Book, whereof the verses are explained in detail -- a Qur'án in Arabic, for people who understand --

بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (٤)

4. Giving Good News and Admonition yet most of them turn away, and so they hear not.

C4464. With all the qualities mentioned in the last note, if men do not profit by its blessings, the fault lies in their will: they turn away, and thus fail to hear the voice that cans to them.

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ...

5. They say:

"Our hearts are under veils, (concealed) from that to which thou dost invite us,

C4465. The consequence of their willful rejection is that a distance is created between Revelation and those for

whom it is meant; their ears become deaf, so that the voice falls fainter and fainter on their ears: they feel a bar between themselves and the Messenger who comes to teach them.

Cf. 7:25.

...وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِن بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ...

and in ours ears in a deafness, and between us and thee is a screen:

...فَاعْمَلْ إِنَّنَا عَامِلُونَ (٥)

so do thou (what thou wilt); for us, we shall do (what we will!)."

C4466. This is either a superiority complex adopting the sarcastic tone of an inferiority complex, or it expresses calculated indifference to spiritual teaching.

In effect it says: 'Our hearts and minds are not intelligent enough to understand your noble ideas, nor our ears sufficiently acute to hear their exposition: you and we are quite different; there is a gulf between us. Why worry about us? You go your way, and we shall go ours!'

...قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَى إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

6. Say thou:

"I am but a man like you:it is revealed to me by inspiration, that your Allah is One Allah:

C4467. The reply is in effect: that the bringer of the Message is not an angel nor a god, and so there can and ought to be no barrier between him and his hearers; but he has been chosen to bring a Message of Truth and Hope to them; they should accept the Gospel of Unity, and by Repentance. obtain Allah's Grace and Forgiveness.

...فَاسْتَقِيمُوا إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ...

so stand true to Him, and ask for His forgiveness."

C4468. There is nothing but pity for those who reject Truth, run after false worship, have no sympathy or charity for their fellow-men, and even deny that there is any future Life.

وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِينَ (٦)...

And woe to those who join gods with Allah --

الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُم بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٧)

7. Those who practice not Regular Charity, and who even deny the Hereafter.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (٨)

8. For those who believe and work deeds of righteousness is a reward that will never fail.

C4469. But blessed are those who have Faith. They will have a Future and a Bliss that will never fail.

Section 2

قُلْ أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ ...

9. Say:

Is it that ye Deny Him Who created the earth in two Days?

C4470. This is a difficult passage, describing the primal creation of our physical earth and the physical heavens around us.

If we count the two Days mentioned in this verse, the four Days, mentioned in verse 10, and the two Days mentioned in verse 12, we get a total of eight Days, while in many passages the creation is stated to have taken place in six Days:

see 7:54, n. 1031; and 32:4, n. 3632.

The Commentators understand the "four Days" in verse 10 to include the two Days in verse 9, so that the total for the universe comes to six Days. This is reasonable, because the processes described in verses 9 and 10 form really one series.

In the one case it is the creation of the formless matter of the earth; in the other case it is the gradual evolution of the form of the earth, its mountains and seas, and its animal and vegetable life, with the "nourishment in due proportion", proper to each. Cf. also 15:19-20.

... وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَندَادًا...

And do ye join equals with Him?

...ذَٰلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩)

He is the Lord of (all) the Worlds.

...وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِن فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا

10. He set on the (earth), Mountains standing firm, high above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth,

C4471. Cf. 13:3 and 16:15, n. 2038.

High above it: the highest mountains are 29,000 feet above sea-level, and the lowest depths of the bottom of the ocean are 31,600 feet below sea-level, so that the vertical difference between the highest and lowest points on the solid crust of the earth is about 11-1/2 miles. The highland areas are the main sources of the water-supply in all the regions of the earth, and vegetable and animal life depends on water-supply.

...وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ ...

and measured therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion, in four Days,

C4472. See n. 4470 above.

... سَوَاءً لِّلسَّائِلِينَ (١٠)

in accordance with (the needs of) those who seek (sustenance).

C4473. Sailin may mean either

- those who seek, or
- those who ask or enquire.

If the former meaning is adopted, the clause means that everything is apportioned to the needs and appetites of Allah's creatures.

If the latter, it means that the needs of enquirers are sufficiently met by what is stated here.

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ...

11. Moreover He Comprehended in His design the sky, and it had been (as) smoke:

C4474. For **istawa** see n. 1386 to 10:3. Cf. also 2:29.

C4475. From 79:30 it would appear as if the earth was spread out after the sky was made.

In the present passage the creation of the earth and the evolution of life on our globe are mentioned first; and the making of the sky into the seven firmaments is mentioned last. The two statements are not inconsistent.

It is stated here that when the sky was made into seven firmaments, it had existed previously as smoke, or vapour, or steam.

The idea I derive from a collation of the relevant Quranic passages is that Allah first created primeval matter, which was as yet without order, shape, or symmetry. This state is called Chaos as opposed to Cosmos in Greek Cosmogony.

The next stage would be the condensation of this primeval matter, into gases, liquids, or solids: on this subject no precise information is given to us: it belongs to the realm of Physics.

About the earth we are told of four stages or Days, and about the heavens, of two stages or Days. For Days see n. 4477 below.

If these stages proceeded or proceed together in time, it is obvious that each stage as we know it on earth is half as long as each stage in the heavens. But these are questions of Physics, Astronomy, or Geology, nor questions of Religion.

... فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا...

He said to it and to the earth: "Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly."

...قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ (١١)

They said: "We do come (together), in willing obedience."

C4476. I take this to mean that Allah's design in creation was not to keep heaven and earth separate, but together, as we indeed are, being part of the solar system, and travellers through space, crossing the path of several comets. And all matter created by Allah willingly obeys the laws laid down for it.

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَى فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا...

12. So He completed them as seven firmaments in two Days and He assigned to each heaven its duty and command.

C4477. For **"Days"**, which may include thousands of years, see 7:54, and n. 1031.

They refer to stages in the evolution of physical nature. In the Biblical cosmogony, (Gen. 1:1-7 and 2:1-7), which reflects old Babylonian cosmogony, the scheme is apparently to be taken literally as to days and is as follows.

- The first day Allah created light;
- the second, the firmament;
- the third, the earth and vegetation;
- the fourth, the stars and plants;
- the fifth, fish and fowl from the sea; and
- the sixth, cattle, creeping things, beasts on land, and man;
- on the seventh day He ended His work and rested.

Our scheme is wholly different.

- Allah did not rest, and never rests. "His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them";
- Allah's work has not ended; His activity still goes on: 32:5 5; 7:54;
- man in our scheme does not come in with land animals; his advent is much later;
- our stages are not sharply divided from each other, as in the above scheme, where the stars and planets

having been created on the fourth day, it is not intelligible how the first three days were counted, nor how vegetation grew on the third day.

Our stages for earth and heaven are not in sequence of time for the heavens and the earth. Our six stages are broadly speaking,

- the throwing off of our planet from cosmic matter;
- its cooling and condensing;
- 3 and 4 the growth of vegetable and animal life;
- 5 and 6 the parallel growth of the starry realm and our solar system.

...وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاء الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا...

And We adorned the lower heaven with lights, and (provided it) with guard.

C4478. Cf. 15:17, and n. 1951; also 37:6-9.

The transition from the third person ("He completed," etc.) to the first person (**"We adorned,"** etc.) may be noted.

The act of creation is an impersonal act: the act of adornment and guarding is a personal favour to Allah's creatures.

...ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (١٢)

Such is the Decree of (Him) the Exalted in Might, Full of knowledge.

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِّثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ (١٣)

13. But if they turn away, say thou:

"I have warned you of a stunning Punishment (as of thunder and lightning) like that which (overtook) the 'Ad and the Thamud!"

C4479. See verse 17 below.

... إِذْ جَاءتْهُمُ الرُّسُلُ مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ

14. Behold, the messengers came to them, from before them and behind them, (preaching):

C4480. "From before them and behind them": i.e., from every side. They were warned from every point of view.

... أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ...

"Serve none but Allah."

...قَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّنَا لَأَنزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً ...

They said,

"If our Lord had so pleased, He would certainly have sent down angels (to preach):

C4481. Cf. 15:7, n. 1941; 6:8-9, n. 841-842.

The 'Ad had more power and material civilisation than the Pagan Arabs contemporary with the holy Prophet. But the greater the material civilisation, the greater the arrogance as the besetting sin.

... فَإِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (١٤)

now we reject your mission (altogether)."

... فَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ

15. Now the 'Ad behaved arrogantly through the land, against (all) truth and reason,

C4482. Against (all) truth and reason: Cf. 7:33.

Their estimate of their own strength was greater than was justified by facts, but if they had all the strength which they arrogated to themselves, yet how could they stand before Allah?

... وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً...

and said: "Who is superior to us in strength?"

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً...

What! did they not see that Allah, Who created them, was superior to them in strength?

...وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ (١٥)

But they continued to reject Our Signs!

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ...

16. So We sent against them a furious Wind through days of disaster,

C4483. The detailed story of the 'Ad and their besetting sin, and the preaching of their Prophet Hud to them will be found in 26:123-140;

also 7:65-72, and n. 1040 to 7:65.

For the furious Wind, Cf. 54:19.

...لِّنُذِيقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

that We might give them a taste of a Penalty of humiliation in this Life;

...وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَخْزَى وَهُمْ لَا يُنصَرُونَ (١٦)

but the Penalty of the Hereafter will be more humiliating still:

and they will find no help.

وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَى عَلَى الْهُدَى...

17. As to the Thamud, We gave them guidance, but they preferred blindness (of heart) to Guidance;

C4484. The story of the Thamud usually goes with that of the '-Ad.

Cf. 26:141-158; also 7:73-79, and n. 1043.

...فَأَخَذَتْهُمْ صَاعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُونِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٧)

so the stunning Punishment of humiliation seized them, because of what they had earned.

C4485. **"The stunning Punishment"** i.e., deafening noises like those of thunder and lightning; or the rumbling of a terrible earthquake.

In 7:78, an earthquake is suggested: see n. 1047 to that verse. Cf. also above. 41:13.

وَنَجَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ (١٨)

18. But We delivered those who believed and practiced righteousness.

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُ أَعْدَاء اللَّهِ إِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (١٩)

19. On the Day that the enemies of Allah will be gathered together to the Fire, they will be marched in ranks.

C4486. "Marched in ranks": to show their further humiliation: for they will be like prisoners going to Punishment.

حَتَّى إِذَا مَا جَاؤُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ...

20. At length, when they reach the (Fire), their hearing, their sight, and their skins will bear witness against them,

C4487. All the members of their bodies and the faculties of their minds, which they misused, will bear witness against them.

Similarly, in 36:65, their hands and their feet bear witness against them.

The **"skin"** not only includes the sense of touch (which is so often misused in sex), but also the sense of taste and the sense of smell, which are specialized forms of the organ of touch. All the sensory organs, and all their intellectual and emotional counterparts advance us by their use and pull us down by their misuse. They become tell-tale witnesses against us if abused.

...بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٠)

as to (all) their deeds.

وَقَالُوا لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا...

21. They will say to their skins: "Why bear ye witness against us?"

C4488. A new phase of their existence will now dawn on them.

They used to think that if they concealed their evil deeds from the rest of the world, nothing would happen to them! But Allah can give "tongues to trees", and can make every fact in life, known and unknown to the

world, contribute to the elucidation of truth and justice. When we succumb to evil, our limbs and faculties themselves betray us.

...قَالُوا أَنطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ...

They will say:

"Allah hath given us speech, (He) Who giveth speech to everything:

...وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢١)

He created you for the first time, and unto Him were ye to return.

وَمَا كُنتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَنْ يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ...

22. "Ye did not seek to hide yourselves, lest your hearing, your sight, and your skins should bear witness against you!

C4489. The limbs and faculties will say:

"You did not seek to hide your evil from us: in fact you used us for your evil, because we were in your power.

Did you not know that Allah knew everything and that our knowledge would be evidence against you?"

...وَلَٰكِن ظَنَنتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٢)

But ye did think that Allah knew not many of the things that ye used to do!

...وَذَٰلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِي ظَنَنتُم بِرَبِّكُمْ أَرْدَاكُمْ...

23. "But this thought of yours which ye did entertain concerning your Lord, hath brought you to destruction,

C4490. "You now see the situation! We were given for your use and service. You misused us, to your own utter and irretrievable destruction!"

...فَأَصْبَحْتُم مِّنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٢٣)

and (now) have ye become of those utterly lost!"

فَإِن يَصْبِرُوا فَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّهُمْ...

24. If, then, they have patience, the Fire will be a Home for them!

C4491. If they have patience: there is sarcasm in the meaning.

"Let them not be impatient: they will soon find a home in the Fire of Hell! If they ask for grace and forgiveness then, it will be too late."

...وَإِن يَسْتَعْتِبُوا فَمَا هُم مِّنَ الْمُعْتَبِينَ (٢٤)

And if they beg to be received into favor, into favor will they not (then) be received.

... وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَاء فَزَيَّنُوا

25. And We have destined for them intimate companions (of like nature),

C4492. Just as the idea of happiness in heaven is expressed, not only by individual satisfaction, but by congenial society, so the idea of Punishment in hell is deepened by the fact that Evil will be made to meet evil: those who made sin fair-seeming in this life will be there to share in the regrets and mutual recriminations which will make life a burden. In fact, in these *Ha-Mim* verses, the idea of fit companionship for the Good and uncongenial company for the Evil, runs like a thread throughout.

See Introduction to Surah 40.

... لَهُم مَّا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ...

Who made alluring to them what was before them and behind them;

C4493. They painted in glowing colours the pleasures of sin in the past and the pleasure of sin in the future, thus practicing a double deception, which will now be found out.

...وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ...

and the sentence among the previous generations of Jinns and men, who have passed away, is proved against them;

C4494. Jinns: see n. 929 to 6:100.

All spirits of wickedness and all men who submitted to them, in the past, were under one common sentence; and future generations who embrace evil will also join them. Cf. 6:128.

...إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ (٢٥)

for they are utterly lost.

C4495. The echo here of verse 23 above completes the argument from another point of view.

Section 4

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُونَ (٢٦)

26. The Unbelievers say:

"Listen not to this Qur'án, but talk at random in the midst of its (reading), that ye may gain the upper hand!"

C4496. A favourite trick of those who wish to dishonour Revelation is, not only not to listen to it themselves, but to talk loudly and insolently when it is being read, so that even the true listeners may not be able to perform their devotions. They think that they are drowning the voice of Allah: in fact they are piling up misery for themselves in the future. For Allah's voice can never be silenced.

فَلَنُذِيقَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا...

27. But We will certainly give the Unbelievers a taste of a severe Penalty,

...وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٧)

and We will requite them for the worst of their deeds.

C4497. Nothing that they can do, however outrageous, will escape its fit punishment. And to reject Allah's Signs is to shut the very door to His Grace and Mercy.

ذَلِكَ جَزَاء أَعْدَاء اللَّهِ النَّارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا دَارُ الْخُلْدِ...

28. Such is the requital of the enemies of Allah -- the Fire:
therein will be for them the Eternal Home:

...جَزَاء بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ (٢٨)

a (fit) requital, for that they were wont to reject Our Signs.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّنَا أَرِنَا الَّذَيْنِ أَضَلَّانَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ...

29. And the Unbelievers will say:
"Our Lord!
show us those, among Jinns and men, who misled us:

C4498. It is one of the qualities of sin and all evil, that it wishes to drag down others in its own camp, and rejoices to see them humiliated and disgraced, just as, in the opposite case, the good rejoice to help and honour others and make them happy wherever they can.

Cf. 6:112-113.

...نَجْعَلْهُمَا تَحْتَ أَقْدَامِنَا لِيَكُونَا مِنَ الْأَسْفَلِينَ (٢٩)

we shall crush them beneath our feet, so that they become the vilest (before all)."

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا...

30. In the case of those who say,
"Our Lord is Allah,"
and, further, stand straight and steadfast,

C4499. The people who succeed in eternal Life are those who recognise and understand the one and only Eternal Reality, that is Allah, and further shape their probationary Life firmly and steadfastly on the principles of that Truth and Reality. They will have their friends and protectors in the good angels, in contrast to the evil ones, who will have no friendship or protection, but only the reproaches of the Evil Ones.

...تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا...

the angels descend on them (from time to time):

"Fear ye not!" (they suggest), "nor grieve!

...وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ (٣٠)

but receive the Glad Tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), the which ye were promised!

...نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَاؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ...

31. "We are your protectors in this life and in the Hereafter:

C4500. "Protectors": Cf. n. 4492 to 41:25 above, and n. 4505 to 41:34 below.

...وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنفُسُكُمْ ...

therein shall ye have all that your souls shall desire;

C4501. Cf. 21:102, 43:71, 52:22. [Eds.]

... وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَّعُونَ (٣١)

therein shall ye have all that ye ask for! --

نُزُلًا مِّنْ غَفُورٍ رَّحِيمٍ (٣٢)

32. "A hospitable gift from One Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!"

C4502. Cf. 3:198.

Through Allah's infinite Mercy and Forgiveness, they will now be in the position of guests to Host, and will receive unnumbered gifts out of all proportion to their own merits.

C.210 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(41:33-54)

The best of men is the man of Faith,
Who calls all men to share his faith,
Whose life is pure, and whose law of life
Is the Will of Allah. Eschew all evil,

And adore Allah, and Him alone.
His Signs are everywhere, and His Message
Is the same through all the ages, a guide
And a healing to those who believe.
Dispute not, but the live righteousness.
Knowledge belongs to Allah, but Falsehood
Deprives man of hope, humility,
And clear sight, and drives him to
Hypocrisy. So turn to Truth, and live.

Section 5

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّن دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ...

33. Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness,

C4503. Better in speech: i.e., speaks better counsel; or is more worthy of being listened to.

That his word reaches the highest mark of human speech is evidenced by three facts:

1. that he calls all to the Truth of Allah, showing that his thoughts are not centered on himself;
2. every deed of his is righteousness, showing that there is no divergence between his preaching and his conduct; and
3. he completely associates himself with the Will of Allah, showing that he is the full embodiment of Islam.

What a fine description of the holy Prophet!

... وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٣٣)

and says, "I am of those who bow in Islam"?

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ...

34. Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better:

C4504. You do not return good for evil, for there is no equality or comparison between the two.

You repel or destroy evil with something which is far better, just as an antidote is better than poison.

- You foil hatred with love.
- You repel ignorance with knowledge, folly and wickedness with the friendly message of Revelation.
- The man who was in the bondage of sin, you not only liberate from sin, but make him your greatest friend and helper in the cause of Allah!

Such is the alchemy of the Word of Allah!

Cf. 23:96; 28:54.

...فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ (٣٤)

then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!

C4505. Hamim: See n. 4500 above, and Introduction to Surah 40.

وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ (٣٥)

35. And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but persons of the greatest good fortune.

C4506. The moral standard referred to in the last verse can only be reached by the exercise of the highest patience and self-restraint.

All sorts of human weaknesses and counsels of pseudo-wisdom and "self-respect" will keep breaking in, but resist them as suggestions of Evil (see next verse).

If you reach anywhere near that high standard, you will be indeed most fortunate in a spiritual sense, for Allah's Revelation will have made you great and free.

... وَإِمَّا يَنزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ

36. And if (at any time) an incitement to discord is made to thee by the Evil One, seek refuge in Allah.

C4507. Nazagha has in it the idea of **discord**, slander, disharmony, as well as incitements to such disturbances in the soul.

They can only proceed from evil, and should be resisted with the help of Allah.

See also last note.

... إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٣٦)

He is the One Who hears and knows all things.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ...

37. Among His Signs are the Night and the Day, and the sun and moon.

Adore not the Sun and the Moon,

C4508. Night and Day are opposites, and yet, by the alchemy of Allah, they can both subserve the purpose of human good, because the Night can give rest while the Day can promote activity.

The **Sun and the Moon** are similarly complementary.

So, in moral and spiritual affairs, seeming opposites may by Allah's alchemy be made to subserve the purposes of Good. They are but instruments: Allah is the Cause.

Adore Allah, and not the things which He has created. Use the things which He has created, but do not adore them.

...وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ (٣٧)

but adore Allah Who created them,

if it is Him ye wish to serve.

... فَإِنِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا

38. But if they (Unbelievers) are arrogant, (no matter):

C4509. It does not in any way affect Allah if men rebel against Him. It is men's own loss.

Allah's glory is being celebrated night and day by angels and men who receive the privilege of approaching His presence. To them it is delight and an honour to be in the sunshine of Truth and Happiness.

... فَالَّذِينَ عِندَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْأَمُونَ (٣٨)

for in the presence of thy Lord are those who celebrate His praises by night and by day. And they never flag (nor feel themselves above it).

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنَّكَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً...

39. And among His Signs is this: thou seest the earth barren and desolate;

C4510. Evil makes of the souls of men what drought makes of land: it kills life, beauty, and fruitfulness.

...فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ...

but when We send down rain to it, it is stirred to life and yields increase.

Allah's Word in the spiritual world has the same wonderful effect as rain has on barren land: it gives life, beauty, and fruitfulness. And the effect of Allah's Word is also seen through the lives of men who repel evil with what is better. They also convert dead souls (which harbour spite and hatred) into living souls, which come into the main current of spiritual life, and help in carrying out Allah's beneficent Purpose.

...إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى...

Truly, He Who gives life to the (dead) earth can surely give life to (men) who are dead.

C4511. Why should we wonder then at the potency of Allah's Word, whether in our probationary lives here, or in the eternal life of the Hereafter.

...إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٣٩)

For He has power over all things.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا...

40. Those who pervert the Truth in Our Signs are not hidden from Us.

C4512. Pervert the Truth in Our Signs; either by corrupting the scriptures or turning them to false and selfish uses; or by neglecting the Signs of Allah in nature around them, or silencing His voice in their own conscience. Everything is known to Allah. Why not work for true salvation at the final Judgment?

...أَفَمَن يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ أَم مَّن يَأْتِي آمِنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

Which is better? --

he that is cast into the Fire, or he that comes safe through, on the Day of Judgement?

...اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٤٠)

Do what ye will:

Verily He seeth (clearly) all that ye do.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ ...

41. Those who reject the Message when it comes to them (are not hidden from Us);

C4513. Mere rejection by men will not silence the Signs of Allah, which will work unintermittently and with the fullest potency.

... وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ (٤١)

and indeed it is a Book of exalted power.

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ...

42. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it:

C4514. Allah's Truth is fully guarded on all sides. No one can get the better of it by attacking it from before or behind it, openly or secretly, or in any way whatever.

...تَنزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ (٤٢)

it is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise.

مَا يُقَالُ لَكَ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِن قَبْلِكَ...

43. Nothing is said to thee that was not said to the messengers before thee:

C4515. The gist of Allah's Message, now, before, and for ever, is the same: Mercy to the erring and repentant; just punishment to those who willfully rebel against Allah.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ وَذُو عِقَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٤٣)

That thy Lord has at His command (all) Forgiveness as well as a most Grievous Penalty.

... وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَمِيًّا

44. Had We sent this as a Qur'án (in a language) other than Arabic,

C4516. Cf. 16:103-105; 12:2; etc.

It was most natural and reasonable that the Messenger being Arab, the Message should be in his own tongue, that he might explain it in every detail, with the greatest power and eloquence. Even though it was to be for the whole world, its initial exposition was thus to be in Arabic. But if people had no faith and were spiritually deaf or blind, it would not matter in what language it came.

...لَّقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ...

they would have said: "Why are not its verses explained in detail?

...أَأَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ...

What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger) an Arab?"

...قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ...

Say: "It is a guide and a healing to those who believe;

...وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى...

and for those who believe not, there is a deafness in their ears, and it is blindness in their (eyes);

C4517. Cf. 41:5, and 6:25.

They pretended that it was too deep for them, when they meant that they were superior to it! The fact was that by putting themselves in an artificially false position, they rendered themselves impervious to the Message. The voice of Revelation or the voice of conscience sounded to them as if it came from a far-off place! They themselves made themselves strangers to it.

...أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ (٤٤)

they are (as it were) being called from a place far distant!"

Section 6

...وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيهِ...

45. We certainly gave Moses the Book aforetime: but dispute arose therein.

...وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ...

Had it not been for a word that went forth before from thy Lord, (their differences) would have been settled between them:

C4518. Callousness and self-sufficiency in religion are often illustrated by sects like the Pharisees and Sadducees among the Jews. Where there are honest differences of opinion, they can, in Allah's Plan, lead to greater enquiry and emulation. Where the differences are fractious, there is often even then time left for repentance.

In any case the Word or Decree of God is for the best good of all, and should not disturb Faith. Cf. 10:19.

A good life, of faith and truth, is in our own interests, and the opposite against our own interests. Allah is never unjust.

...وَإِنَّهُمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ (٤٥)

but they remained in suspicious disquieting doubt thereon.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا...

46. Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul:

...وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ (٤٦)

nor is thy Lord ever unjust (in the least) to His servants.

إِلَيْهِ يُرَدُّ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ...

47. To Him is referred the Knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment: He knows all):

C4519. There are profound mysteries which the knowledge of man cannot fathom but which are all open knowledge to Allah, because He plans, guides and controls all things. The precise time of the Hour of Judgment is one of these.

We are not to dispute about matters like these, which are matters of speculation as far as human intelligence is concerned. Such speculations ruined the Ummah of Moses, and set them on the and path of doubts and controversies. Our task is to do our duty and love Allah and man (see the last two verses).

Cf. also 21:4.

...وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِن ثَمَرَاتٍ مِّنْ أَكْمَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنثَى وَلَا

تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ...

no date-fruit comes out of its sheath, nor does a female conceive (within her womb) nor bring forth (young), but by His Knowledge.

...وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِي...

"Where are the partners (ye attributed) to Me?"

The Day that (Allah) will propound to them the (question),

C4520. When the final restoration of true values comes, all falsehood will be exposed openly and publicly. The false gods will vanish, and their falsehood will be acknowledged by those who had lapsed from true worship. But it will be too late then for repentance.

...قَالُوا آذَنَّاكَ مَا مِنَّا مِن شَهِيدٍ (٤٧)

They will say,

"We do assure thee not one of us can bear witness!"

وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَدْعُونَ مِن قَبْلُ وَظَنُّوا مَا لَهُم مِّن مَّحِيصٍ (٤٨)

48. The (deities) they used to invoke aforetime will leave them in the lurch, and they will perceive that they have no way of escape.

لَا يَسْأَمُ الْإِنسَانُ مِن دُعَاءِ الْخَيْرِ وَإِن مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَؤُوسٌ قَنُوطٌ (٤٩)

49. Man does not weary of asking for good (things), but if ill touches him, he gives up all hope (and) is lost in despair.

C4521. Not only is man prone to doubts and speculations in matters beyond his ken, thus disturbing the even tenor of his spiritual life: he is apt to run into opposite extremes in his daily experiences in this life. He is always hankering after the good things of this life. They are not all good for him. If he receives a little check, even though it may be to bring him to his bearings and turn his thoughts to higher things, he is apt to fall into despair.

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا مِن بَعْدِ ضَرَّاءَ مَسَّتْهُ ...

50. When We give him a taste of some mercy from Ourselves, after some adversity has touched him,

C4522. When men entertain false ideas of values in life, there are two or three possible attitudes they may adopt in reaction to their experiences.

- In the first place, their desire may be inordinate for the good things of this life, and any little check brings them into a mood of despair. See last note.
- In the second place, if their desire is granted, they are puffed up, and think that everything is due to their own cleverness or merit, and they forget Allah.
- Not only that, but they go a step further, and begin to doubt a Hereafter at all! If by chance they have a faint glimmering of the Hereafter, which they cannot

help recognising, they think themselves "favoured of Heaven", because of some small favours given to them in this life by way of trial. Thus they turn all things, good or evil, away from their real purpose, because they are devoted to falsehood.

... لَيَقُولَنَّ هَذَا لِي...

he is sure to say, "This is due to my (merit):

...وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِن رُّجِعْتُ إِلَى رَبِّي إِنَّ لِي عِندَهُ

لَلْحُسْنَى...

I think not that the Hour (of Judgment) will (ever) be established;

but if I am brought back to my Lord, I have (much) good (stored) in His sight!"

...فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (٥٠)

But We will show the Unbelievers the truth of all that they did, and We shall give them the taste of a severe Penalty.

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنسَانِ ...

51. When We bestow favors on man,

C4523. The last verse and note dealt with men's distortion of the values of life. Here we come to men's ingratitude and hypocrisy.

If they receive good, they go farther away from Allah, instead of coming nearer to him. If they suffer ill, they call on Allah and offer prolonged prayers, but it is not sincere devotion and therefore worthless.

...أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَى بِجَانِبِهِ...

he turns away, and gets himself remote on his side (instead of coming to Us);

C4524. Cf. 17:83.

...وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُو دُعَاءٍ عَرِيضٍ (٥١)

and when Evil seizes him, (he comes) full of prolonged prayer!

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ كَفَرْتُم بِهِ...

52. Say:

"See ye if the (Revelation) is (really) from Allah, and yet do ye reject it?

C4524a. An argument is now addressed, of a most searching nature.

Examine your own souls. See if you do not really find something unusual in Allah's Revelation!

If you do, and yet you reject it, what a terrible responsibility fastens itself on you?

Could anything be more foolish or more misguided than to reject a Message which is transforming the whole world?

...مَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ هُوَ فِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ (٥٢)

Who is more astray than one who is in schism far (from any purpose)?"

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ...

53. Soon will We show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth.

C4524c. Allah's Truth always spreads, in its own good time, across to the uttermost ends of the earth, as it did in the case of Islam. But its intensive spread in the hearts and souls of people is even more remarkable than its extensive spread over large areas.

Men like the four Companions of the Prophet-and many more-became leaders of men and arbiters of the world's fate.

Madinah from being a focus of jarring tribes and factions that hated each other, became the seat of heroic actions and plans and the nursery of great and noble heroic deeds that resounded throughout the world.

It makes no difference what men may say or do. Allah's Truth must prevail, and He knows who obstruct and who help.

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٥٣)...

Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّن لِّقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ...

54. Ah indeed! are they in doubt concerning the Meeting with their Lord?

C4525. Short-sighted people may like to think that there may be no Judgment. But Judgment is inevitable and cannot be escaped, for Allah "doth encompass all things."

أَلَا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطٌ (٥٤)...

Ah indeed! it is He that doth encompass all things!



اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يُنِيبُ

Allâh chooses for Himself whom He wills, and guides unto Himself who turns to Him in repentance and in obedience.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Shura

الشُّورَى

Introduction and Summary

This is the third Surah of the *Ha Mim* series of seven Surahs, for which see the Introduction to Surah 40.

The theme is how evil and blasphemy can be cured by the Mercy and guidance of Allah, which come through His revelation. Men are asked to settle their differences in patience by mutual Consultation (42;38); which explains the title of the Surah.

Summary- The Contrast of blasphemy and disputation against Revelation, unity, and Faith, as relying on the Signs and the Mercy of Allah (42:1-29, and C.211).

Evil comes through men's own deeds, of which they cannot avoid the consequences, but Guidance comes through Allah's Mercy and Revelation (42:30-53, and C. 212).

C.211 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(42:1-29)

Inspiration is part of Glory and Goodness
Of Allah. His Unity is shown
In His Creation; yet man will turn
To false gods, and dispute about Religion.
Faith has been one at all times,
But sects and divisions rose through selfish
Contumacy. Let all contention cease,
And conduct weighed by the just balance
Of Allah's Word. The just and the unjust
Will all be brought before Allah. Whose Mercy
In His marvelous Creation-one, yet diverse!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim,

C4526. These Abbreviated Letters are discussed in Introduction to Surah 40.

عسق (٢)

2. 'Ain Sin Qaf.

C4527. This Surah has a double set of Abbreviated Letters, one in the first verse, and one in this second verse. No authoritative explanation of this second set is available, and I refrain from speculation.

See Appendix I.

كَذَٰلِكَ يُوحِي إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكَ ...

3. Thus doth (He) send Inspiration to thee as (He did) to those before thee --

C4528. Inspiration is full of Power and Wisdom, and both these qualities are derived from the Power and Wisdom of Allah. Unlike human power, this Power is necessarily good and merciful; unlike human wisdom, this Wisdom is necessarily complete and indisputable.

... اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣)

Allah, Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

4. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth:

...وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (٤)

and He is Most High, Most Great.

C4529. We cannot conceive the distance which separates the Most High from the highest of His creatures, Allah Most Great from the greatest of the beings that we can imagine. The highest heavens are mentioned in the next 'verse, as well as the noblest creatures that we can imagine, the angels.

تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِن فَوْقِهِنَّ...

5. The heavens are almost rent asunder from above them (by His Glory):

C4530. How can we conceive of sublimity and greatness in a higher degree than this, that the highest heavens are almost ready to burst asunder by His Glory, which is higher than all?

...وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ...

and the angels celebrate the Praises of their Lord, and pray for forgiveness for (all) beings on earth:

C4531. The angels are the noblest and purest beings of whom we can conceive. They reflect on the one side Allah's Glory and Praise, and on the other, two other

attributes of Allah, that look towards His erring creatures, viz,

- Forgiveness and
- Mercy.

The two sets of attributes are complementary. They thus proclaim in their own being and in their prayers the Greatness and unbounded Goodness of Allah.

...أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٥)

Behold! Verily Allah is He, the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

...وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَولِيَاء اللَّهُ حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْهِمْ

6. And those who take as protectors others besides Him, Allah doth watch over them;

C4532. We now come to the contrast, the folly and ingratitude of man. But that cannot escape its final doom in the Universal Plan of Allah. Only Judgment rests with Allah.

...وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ (٦)

and thou art not the disposer of their affairs.

A Prophet is not responsible for the conduct of men, in a system which permits some limited free-will and personal responsibility.

... وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا

7. Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur'án:

C4533. The point of the Quran being in Arabic is that it is plain and intelligible to the people through whom and among whom it was promulgated;

see next clause.

... لِّتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا...

that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her --

C4534. The City of Makkah. See n. 913 to 6:92.

This is undoubtedly a Makkan verse. Even apart from the Qiblah, Makkah is the centre of Islam, and "all around her" is the whole world.

...وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ...

and warn (them) of the Day of Assembly, of which there is no doubt:

...فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ (٧)

(when) some will be in the Garden, and some in the Blazing Fire.

C4535. The contrast is again emphasised, as explained in the Summary.

...وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِن يُدْخِلُ مَن يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ

8. If Allah had so willed, He could have made them a single people; but He admits whom He will to His Mercy;

C4536. Cf. 5:51, and n. 761.

It is one of the Signs of Allah that He has made us different, that we may be tried in the exercise of our will, and that we may reach, through righteousness and Faith, our highest development, and enjoy His gifts of Mercy and Grace. But we must not become contentious, and fall into evil: we must understand our own limitations. Otherwise we shall lose His grace and protection.

...وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُم مِّن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (٨)

and the wrongdoers will have no protector nor helper.

...أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ

9. What! Have they taken (for worship) protectors besides Him?

... فَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى...

But it is Allah, He is the **Protector**, and it is He Who gives life to the dead:

C4537. There can be no greater ingratitude or blasphemy than to worship false gods, or to seek protection from things that have no power, when Allah-

Who has power over all things-is always seeking to protect and cherish His creatures, and placing in their way all the means for attaining the best in them.

...وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٩)

it is He Who has power over all things.

Section 2

...وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِن شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ

10. Whatever it be wherein ye differ, the decision thereof is with Allah:

C4538. In the highest issues of life men may see things differently. If their differences arise merely from selfish motives, or narrowness of vision, they are sinning against their own souls.

If their differences arise from sincere but mistaken notions, their proper course is not to form divisions and sects, or to increase contention and hatred among men, but to leave all things to Allah, trusting in Him and turning to Him in all difficulties. The final decision in all things is with Him.

...ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ (١٠)

Such is Allah my Lord: in Him I trust, and to Him I turn.

...فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

11. (He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth:

...جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا يَذْرَؤُكُمْ فِيهِ

He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs among cattle: by this means does He multiply you:

C4539. The mystery of sex has not only its physical aspects, but its moral and spiritual aspects, and therefore mankind is in this respect differentiated from the lower animals, and among mankind the grades and qualities are suggested by the phrase **"from among yourselves"**.

As regards **cattle**, they are specially mentioned among the animals, as having special relations with man and specially subserving his needs, not only in the physical sphere, but also in the matter of transport, which is the key to all civilization and culture:

Cf. 36:71-73;

also 23:21-22, where they are compared to ships, the symbol of international intercourse.

...لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ البَصِيرُ (١١)

there is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things).

... لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

12. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth:

... يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَقْدِرُ...

He enlarges and restricts the Sustenance to whom He will:

C4540. "Sustenance", here as elsewhere, stands for all things that support every phase of life, physical, social, intellectual, or spiritual. Cf. 10:59, n. 1447.

The source of all gifts is Allah; His bounty is inexhaustible, and He gives to all; but He does not give to all in the same measure, because, out of the fullness of His knowledge and wisdom, He can judge best what is best for any of His creatures.

... إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٢)

for He knows full well all things.

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ...

13. The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah-the which We have sent by inspiration to thee-

C4541. Allah's Religion is the same in essence, whether given, for example, to Noah, Abraham, Moses, or Jesus, or to our holy Prophet. The source of unity is the revelation from Allah.

In Islam it is "established" as an institution, and does not remain merely a vague suggestion.

...وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى ...

and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus:

... أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ...

Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no divisions therein:

C4542. Faith, Duty or Religion, is not a matter to dispute about. The formation of sects is against the very principle of Religion and Unity. What we should strive for is steadfastness in duty and faith, and unity among mankind.

...كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ...

to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which thou callest them.

C4543. Unity, unselfishness, love for Allah and man,- these things are inconsistent with selfish aggrandizement, unjust suppression of our fellow-creatures, false worship, and false conduct to our brethren. Hence the Gospel of Unity, though it is in complete accord with the pure pattern after which Allah made us, is yet hard to those who love self and falsehood. But Grace is free to all, and in His wise Plan, He will specially select Teachers to show the Way to humanity, and no one who turns to Him will lack guidance.

...اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يَشَاء وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يُنِيبُ (١٣)

Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him).

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ...

14. And they became divided only after knowledge reached them -- through selfish envy as between themselves.

C4544. Cf. 2:213.

If you reject Truth after it has reached you, it can only be through selfish contumacy or envy.

...وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى لَّقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ...

Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from thy Lord, (tending) to a Term appointed, the matter would have been settled between them:

C4545. Cf. 10:19, and n. 1407.

Allah's decree has allowed a certain Term during which a sinner has the chance of repentance and forgiveness. Were it not so, sin would be punished at once, and the matter would be decided straightway.

So also, when people reject Truth from selfish or contumacious motives, they get rope: perchance they may repent.

...وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ (١٤)

but truly those who have inherited the Book after them are in suspicious (disquieting) doubt concerning it.

C4546. Cf. 14:9 and n. 1884.

"Those who have inherited the Book" are the People of the Book, of the ages since the Book or Revelation came to them. Referring to the Jews and Christians, contemporary with our Prophet, how true it is that they were broken up into hostile sects which hated and persecuted each other!

Islam came to unite them, and it did. For the present phases of Christianity and Judaism are of later growth.

فَلِذَٰلِكَ فَادْعُ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ...

15. Now then, for that (reason), call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast as thou art commanded, nor follow thou their vain desires;

C4547. How beautifully the mission of Islam is commended in this verse!

1. The more sectarianism and division there is in the world, the more need is there for the Gospel of Unity.

2. It must steadfastly pursue its way.
3. It must not be deflected by worldly or political motives.
4. Its faith must be directly in Allah and in Allah's Revelation. "The Book" mentioned here covers all the revelations sent by Allah to His prophets.
5. it must judge justly between warring factions, as the Religion of Peace and Unity.

...وَقُلْ آمَنتُ بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِن كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ...

"I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you.

...اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ...

Allah is Our Lord and your Lord.

For us (is the responsibility for) Our deeds, and for you for your deeds.

There is no contention between us and you.

C4548. The Mission of Islam is further described.

6. The God whom it preaches is not an exclusive God: He is the Lord of the Worlds: to any given person, of whatever faith, 'He is your Allah, as well as mine.'
7. Our Faith is not a question of words; it is deeds which decide; each one of us has personal responsibility for his own conduct.
8. There is no cause of contention whatever, when we preach Unity, Truth, and the Hereafter.
9. If you have doubts, the final arbiter is Allah, and His pleasure is our Goal.

...اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (١٥)

Allah will bring us together, and to Him is (Our) final goal.

وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ...

16. But those who dispute concerning Allah after He has been accepted,

C4549. After He has been accepted. The disputants are the Unbelievers who pugnaciously assault the minds of Believers after the Believers have by conviction accepted Faith in Allah as leading to spiritual Light.

حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ (١٦)...

futile is their dispute in the sight of their Lord: on them is Wrath, and for them will be a Penalty Terrible.

Such disputation is futile. An inner spiritual experience can never be shaken by dialectical assaults. On the contrary such disputations recoil on the heads of those who indulge in them. Allah's Wrath is on them in this life, and the **terrible Penalty** of the Hereafter must inevitably follow their evil plots against Truth.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ...

17. It is Allah Who has sent down the Book in truth, and the Balance (by which to weigh conduct).

C4550. Revelation is like a **balance**, an instrument placed by Allah in our hands, by which we can weigh all moral issues, all questions of right and wrong in conduct. We must do so constantly. For the Judgment in any given case may come at any time: it may be quite near, and we must always be prepared.

The **Balance** may also refer to the God given faculty by which man can judge between right and wrong.

وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ (١٧)...

And what will make thee realize that perhaps the Hour is close at hand?

يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا...

18. Only those wish to hasten it who believe not in it:

C4551. The Unbelievers do not believe in Judgment and laugh at it. They say defiantly, "If there is to be a punishment, let it come at once!" The threefold answer to this will be found in n. 1810 to 13:6.

With those who believe, the case is different. They know that the Hereafter is an awful Reality, and prepare for it. They see clearly on what a wrong track the scoffers are!

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ...

those who believe hold it in awe, and know that it is the Truth.

...أَلَا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ (١٨)

Behold, verily those that dispute concerning the Hour are far astray.

... اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ ...

19. Gracious is Allah

C4552. Latif so kind, gracious, and understanding, as to bestow gifts finely suited to the needs of the recipients.

For the various meanings of **Latif**, see n. 2844 to 22:63.

Cf. also 12:100.

... بِعِبَادِهِ ...

to His servants:

C4553. "Servants" here seems to include all men, just and unjust, for Allah provides for them all.

... يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاء...

He gives Sustenance to whom He pleases:

C4554. Sustenance, i.e., provision for all needs.

"To whom He pleases" is not restrictive, but modal, 'Allah provides for all, but His provision is according to His wise Will and Plan, and not according to people's extravagant demands.' He can provide for all, because He has complete power and can carry out His Will.

A further comment will be found in the next verse.

...وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ (١٩)

and He has Power and can carry out His Will.

Section 3

مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ...

20. To any that desires the tilth of the Hereafter, We give increase in his tilth;

...وَمَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِن

نَّصِيبٍ (٢٠)

and to any that desires the tilth of this world, We grant somewhat thereof, but he has no share or lot in the Hereafter.

C4555. The parable is from the efforts of the husbandman, who ploughs and prepares the soil, sows the seed, weeds in due season, and reaps the harvest, You reap as you sow. But Allah will add manifold advantages for spiritual tilth. To those who are only engrossed in the vanities of this world, something may accrue in this world, but the next world is closed to them.

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاء شَرَعُوا لَهُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَن بِهِ اللَّهُ...

21. What!

have they partners (in godhead), who have established for them some religion without the permission of Allah?

C4556. Nothing can exist without the permission of Allah. Can people, who indulge in false worship say: "Why does Allah permit it?"

The answer is: "a certain latitude is allowed with the grant of a limited form of free will. When the time for Judgment comes, the Punishment is sure."

See n. 1810 to 13:6.

Decree (or Word) of Judgment: See n. 1407 to 10:19.

...وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ

عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢١)

Had it not been for the Decree of Judgement, the matter would have been decided between them (at once): but verily the wrongdoers will have a grievous Penalty.

تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ...

22. Thou wilt see the wrongdoers in fear on account of what they have earned, and (the burden of) that must (necessarily) fall on them.

C4557. The chief feature of the punishment of wrong-doing is that the minds of the wrong-doers are haunted with terror on account of their own guilty conscience. They cannot possibly escape the weight of that terror.

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ...

But those who believe and work righteous deeds will be in the luxuriant meads of the Gardens:

C4558. In contrast with the withering terror of the wrong-doers is the ease and rational happiness of those who do good. "On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (2:38).

...لَهُم مَّا يَشَاؤُونَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ (٢٢)

they shall have before their Lord, all that they wish for: that will indeed be the magnificent Bounty (of Allah).

Their wills will have been purified, and they shall have all that they shall desire, **"before their Lord"**. That is, their highest Bliss will be the sight of their Lord. No higher Bounty can they wish for.

ذَلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ...

23. That is (the Bounty) whereof Allah gives Glad Tidings to His Servants who believe and do righteous deeds.

C4559. Heaven may be pictured to our minds in various forms. This is one of the highest, and Allah announces it freely to the righteous.

...قُل لَّا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى...

Say:

"No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin."

C4560. No sort of tangible reward does the prophet of Allah ask for proclaiming the Glad Tidings of Allah. But at least he has the right to ask that his kith and kin should not persecute him and put all sorts of obstacles in his way, as did the Quraysh against the Holy Prophet.

The love of kindred may be extended to mean the love of our common humanity, for all mankind are brothers descended from Adam. Everyone can understand the ordinary love of kindred. (R).

...وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا

And if anyone earns any good, We shall give Him an increase of good in respect thereof:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ (٢٣)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (service).

C4561. Cf. 35:29-30, and notes 3915 (for increase) and 3917 (for Allah's appreciation of service).

...أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِن يَشَأِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ

24. What!

do they say, "He has forged a falsehood against Allah"?

But if Allah willed, He could seal up thy heart.

C4562. If any one has a doubt about a prophet's mission, let him look at the prophet's life, at his work, at his character.

Allah loves Truth, not Falsehood. Allah's aid goes with Truth, not with Falsehood. The beauty and power of Allah's Word cannot be found in Falsehood. The false man's heart would be sealed, not expanded to new heights, as is that of the Message-bearer of Allah.

...وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ

And Allah blots out Vanity, and proves the Truth by His Words.

...إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٢٤)

For He knows well the secrets of all hearts.

...وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ

25. He is the One that accepts repentance from His Servants and forgives sins:

C4563. Whatever the sin, Allah's Mercy is open to sincere Repentance, at all times, until the decree of condemnation issues.

...وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٢٥)

and He knows all that ye do.

...وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ

26. And He listens to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, and gives them increase of His Bounty:

C4564. To the prayers of the righteous He listens, and He gives them of His Bounty beyond their deserts. Every time they do a little good, they are increased in their goodness. Every right impulse or aspiration is strengthened and leads to progressive spiritual advancement.

...وَالْكَافِرُونَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ (٢٦)

but for the Unbelievers there is a terrible Penalty.

... وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ

27. If Allah were to enlarge the provision for His Servants, they would indeed transgress beyond all bounds through the earth;

C4565. It may be objected that all prayers, even of good people, are not answered. The reply is:

- that even everyone who is good does not necessarily know what is best for him, for the values in this life are curiously distorted; and

- on account of their want of knowledge, if everyone got all he asked for, there would be chaos and confusion, and "transgression beyond bounds through the earth", for the different interests are so intermingled and balanced that some measure must be observed in granting people's wishes. This measure is best supplied by the watchful care of Allah and His perfect knowledge of all our real needs.

... وَلَكِن يُنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاء...

but He sends (it) down in due measure as He pleases:

C4566. "As He pleases" is here almost equivalent to "as He thinks best".

...إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ (٢٧)

for He is with His Servants well-acquainted, Watchful.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ...

28. He is the One that sends down rain (even) after (men) have given up all hope, and scatters His Mercy (far and wide).

C4567. That men should get such a blessing as rain when they expect it according to ordinary calculations or probabilities does not impress them, as it is a daily occurrence. But Allah's mercy is more than this. It comes to our aid even when all hope is lost, and gives us new chances and new openings where we least expect them. Ms quality of cherishing and protecting His creatures is always active, and what higher praise can we give?

...وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٨)

And He is the Protector, Worthy Of all Praise.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا مِن دَابَّةٍ...

29. And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the living **creatures** that He has **scattered through them:**

C4568. Dabbatun: beasts, living, crawling creatures of all kinds: see n. 166 to 2:164.

Similarly in 24:45, and other passages, the word is used for living creatures of all kinds, life generally, whose material basis is the mysterious thing which science calls protoplasm. The more our biological knowledge increases, the more do we marvel at the unity of Life on the one hand, and its diversity on the other.

C4569. Life is not confined to our one little Planet. It is a very old speculation to imagine some life like human life on the planet Mars. Though no scientific demonstration is possible, it is reasonable to suppose that Life in some form or other is scattered through some of the millions of heavenly bodies scattered through space. What a wonderful Sign of Allah! The Almighty Who created such countless beings has surely the power to bring them together.

وَهُوَ عَلَى جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ (٢٩)...

and He has power to gather them together when He wills.

The Almighty Who created such countless beings has surely the power to bring them together.

C.212 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(42:30-53)

What we call the ills of life is due
To our own ill-deeds, and many of them
Are forgiven by Allah. His Plan can never
Be frustrated. This Life is but a stage
Of convenience: live true and resist
All wrong, but learn the best way to do so.
On Allah rely; else no protector
Will you find. Allah's revelation
Comes as a Guide and Mercy; it shows
The Straight Way, the way of Allah All-Wise.

Section 4

وَمَا أَصَابَكُم مِّن مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ ...

30. Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought,

C4570. All evil, all sorrow, all pain and affliction, are things not normal, things twisted from the pure and holy nature as created by Allah's hands. As far as man is concerned, his misfortunes are but the consequences of the things he has done. He must bear personal responsibility for them and not throw the blame on others.

... وَيَعْفُو عَن كَثِيرٍ (٣٠)

and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness.

وَمَا أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

31. Nor can ye frustrate (aught), (fleeing) through the earth;

C4571. Every evil deed or word or thought must have its evil consequences: but if Allah forgives anything,-and He forgives much, yet no one imagine that he has defeated- or can defeat-Allah's Will or Plan.

...وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ (٣١)

nor have ye, besides Allah, anyone to protect or to help.

The only help or protection that is possible is from Allah.

Cf. 29:22.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ الْجَوَارِ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ (٣٢)

32. And among His Signs are the ships, smooth-running through the ocean, (tall) as mountains.

C4572. The great and stately ships are appealed to again and again as being among the Signs of Allah, from many aspects.

The aspect referred to here is how the great sailing ship runs prosperously as long as "the breath of heaven fill

the sail", and what a miserable helpless creature she becomes when she once becomes becalmed.

Students of English literature will remember the striking picture which Coleridge draws in his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

The becalmed ship is as it were in the grip of Death because of the crime which the sailor had committed, and his mind feels psychologically the full force of the Sign.

By analogy we can apply this to other craft: the steamer is not free from other dangers of the sea, nor air-craft from numerous dangers of the air.

إِن يَشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ...

33. If it be His Will, He can still the Wind: then would they become motionless on the back of the (ocean).

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ (٣٣)

Verily in this are Signs for everyone who patiently perseveres and is grateful.

C4573. If we study such Signs in the right spirit, we learn the highest lessons for out spiritual life: on the one hand, patient perseverance with reliance on Allah, and on the other a feeling or attitude of grateful thanks to Allah, that He enables us to achieve so much in spite of our shortcomings, and forgives in us so much that deserves punishment and disaster.

أَوْ يُوبِقْهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوا وَيَعْفُ عَن كَثِيرٍ (٣٤)

34. Or He can cause them to perish because of the (evil) which (the men) have earned:

but much doth He forgive.

وَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مَا لَهُم مِّن مَّحِيصٍ (٣٥)

35. But let those know, who dispute about Our Signs, that there is for them no way of escape.

C4574. If we treat Allah's Signs in the wrong spirit, i.e., contumaciously reject them or constantly dispute about them instead of trying to understand them, we are told that such tactics will avail us nothing. we cannot escape the consequences of our sins, The only way to escape is by repentance on our part and the grant of mercy by Allah.

فَمَا أُوتِيتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

36. Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this Life:

C4575. Any good (or ill) which is our lot is only a temporary phase to serve the convenience of this life. But there is a higher good, which comes from Allah's own Presence. Such good is both superior in quality, and more permanent.

In the same way, any ills that we may suffer in this life, have reference only to the conditions of this our life of probation, The ills that we "earn" in our spiritual Life-such as deprivation of Allah's Grace-are far more momentous and permanent.

...وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٣٦)

but that which is with Allah is better and more lasting: (it is) for those

- who believe and put their trust in their Lord;

C4576. The higher and more permanent gifts which come from Allah's Presence are for those who truly worship and serve Allah.

These are described by nine of their characteristics: viz.

1. they have Faith: and it follows that
2. they trust in Allah, instead of running after false standards or values:
3. they eschew the more serious offences against Allah's Law, and of course keep clear of any offences against sex (indecencies);

4. while knowing that they are not themselves perfect, they are ready to forgive others, even though they are sorely tried with anger and provocation;

for the rest see n. 4578.

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ ...

37. - Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds,

C4577. Here we are speaking of the ordinary man or woman who tries to follow Allah's Law: he or she is not perfect, but at least eschews the major breaches of conduct.

For those higher in spiritual degree there is of course a stricter standard. But all are entitled to the blessing of Islam, whatever their degree.

... وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ (٣٧)

- and, when they are angry even then forgive;

... وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ

38. - Those who hearken to their Lord,

- and establish regular prayer;

C4578. Continuing the enumeration of the characteristics described in n. 4576 above, we have the following further qualities in those who wish to serve Allah.

5. They are ready at all times to hearken to Allah's Signs, or to listen to the admonitions of prophets of Allah, and to follow the true Path, as they understand it;

6. they keep personal contact with Allah, by habits of Prayer and Praise;

7. their conduct in life is open and determined by mutual Consultation between those who are entitled to voice. e.g., in private domestic affairs, as between husband and wife, or other responsible members of the household; in affairs of business, as between partners or parties interested; and in State affairs, as

between rulers and ruled, or as between different departments of administration, to preserve the unity of administration;

8. they do not forget Charity, or the help due to their weaker brethren, out of the wealth or gifts or talents or opportunities, which Allah has provided for themselves; and

9. when other people use them despitefully, they are not cowed down or terrorized into submission and acceptance of evil, but stand up for their rights within the limits mentioned in verse 40. (R).

... وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ...

- who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation;

C4579. "Consultation." This is the key-word of the Surah, and suggests the ideal way in which a good man should conduct his affairs, so that, on the one hand, he may not become too egotistical, and, on the other, he may not lightly abandon the responsibilities which devolve on him as a Personality whose development counts in the sight of Allah. See the points in head 7 under n. 4578 above.

This principle was applied to its fullest extent by the holy Prophet in his private and public life, and was fully acted upon by the early rulers of Islam.

Modern representative government is an attempt-by no means perfect-to apply this principle in State affairs.

See my Religious Polity of Islam.

...وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (٣٨)

- who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance;

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنتَصِرُونَ (٣٩)

39. - And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.

C4580. This follows from the high value attached to an individual soul's Personality in Islam. Cf. last note.

There are four possible situations that may arise: an individual may have to stand up against an oppressor

1. for his own trampled rights, or
2. for the rights of others within his ken; or
3. a community may have similarly to stand up for its own rights collectively: or
4. for the rights of others.

Nos. 2, 3, and 4 are considered highly meritorious for all, though few have the courage or the spirit to rise to so high a standard.

No. I is specially liable to abuse on account of man's selfishness;

Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are also abused by men pretending to motives of public good when they are serving their own personal interests or idiosyncrasies; hence the qualifications mentioned in the next four verses and the notes thereto.

وَجَزَاء سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا ...

40. The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree):

C4581. See last note.

When you stand up for rights, either on private or public grounds, it may be through processes of law, or by way of private defence in so far as the law permits private action. But in all cases you must not seek a compensation greater than the injury suffered. The most you can do is to demand equal redress, i.e., a harm equivalent to the harm done to you. Even this may serve to curb your unregenerate soul, or a community bent on revenge. But the ideal mode is not to slake your thirst for vengeance, but to follow better ways leading to the reform of the offender or his reconciliation. See 41:34, and 23:96.

You can take steps to prevent repetition, by physical or moral means; the best moral means would be to turn hatred into friendship by forgiveness and love. In that

case the compensation or reward (if we must use such terms) is infinitely greater, for it wins the good pleasure of Allah.

But this active righting of wrongs, whether by physical or by moral or spiritual means, which are commended as better, is an antithesis to the monkish doctrine, when you are smitten on one cheek, to turn the other also. This would not suppress, but encourage wrong-doing. It is practised by none but poltroons, and is preached only by hypocrites, or men who want to make slaves of others by depriving them of the power of self- defence. It occurs in two of the four canonical Gospels (Matt. 5:39, and Luke 6:29), but we need not therefore assume that it was preached by Jesus.

... فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ...

but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, His reward is due from Allah:

C4582. To love Allah is the highest motive of our conduct, for it leads to the love of Allah's creatures; to win the approbation and love of Allah, is the highest reward, far transcending any compensation or satisfaction we can obtain in this life.

...إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٠)

for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong.

C4583. Allah does not love those who do wrong. If, therefore we tolerate wrong, or encourage wrong by allowing it to run rampant when we can prevent it, we fail in our duty to Allah.

وَلَمَنِ انتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُوْلَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِم مِّن سَبِيلٍ (٤١)

41. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such there is no cause of blame.

C4584. Such people are not to be blamed, though they are following the lower law. The blame is on those who arrogantly ride roughshod over the land, oppressing people with grievous wrong.

See next verse.

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ...

42. The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice:

C4585. The fact that men seek the lower rather than the higher Law is itself a result of arrogant wrong-doing of which the type was the Pharaoh who claimed to be "your Lord Most High" and oppressed the Israelites, and kept his own people under slavery and subjection, and the false glamour of magic and deception.

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُم عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٤٢)...

for such there will be a Penalty grievous.

وَلَمَن صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (٤٣)

43. But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs.

C4586. It is harder to be patient and forgive, and yet to get wrongs righted, as was done by the holy Prophet, than to bluster about and "punish the guilty" or "teach them lessons".

It may look like futility or lack of purpose, but in reality it is the highest and noblest form of courage and resolution. And it may carry out the purpose of reform and the suppression of evil even better than stem punishment.

The gentleness of innocence often "persuades where stronger measures fail." But of course circumstances alter cases, and there is some allowance also to be made for the personal equation of the men you have to deal with: in some cases severity may be called for, but it should be from a strict judicial motive, and not merely from personal anger or spite or any lower motive in disguise.

Section 5

وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن وَلِيٍّ مِّن بَعْدِهِ...

44. For any whom Allah leaves astray, there is no protector thereafter,

...وَتَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ إِلَى مَرَدٍّ مِّن

سَبِيلٍ (٤٤)

and thou wilt see the wrongdoers, when in sight of the Penalty, Say:

"Is there any way (to effect) a return?

C4587. When the actual consequences of evil are in sight, the foolish sinner wishes that it were possible to get back to the life of probation. But he neglected or abused it and rejected Allah's Grace all the time. How can he then be restored to a closed chapter of his life?

وَتَرَاهُمْ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا خَاشِعِينَ مِنَ الذُّلِّ يَنظُرُونَ مِن طَرْفٍ

خَفِيٍّ...

45. And thou wilt see them brought forward to the (Penalty), in a humble frame of mind because of (their) disgrace, (and) looking with a stealthy glance.

C4588. They were very arrogant in their probationary life. Now they will be humbled to the dust. And they will be in utter despair and misery. They will not be able to see the favours and good things of the other life (Cf. 20:124-126).

Even their misery, which will. face them as a terrible Reality, they will only be able to look at askance, so thoroughly cowed will be their spirit.

...وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ

يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

And the Believers will say:

"Those are indeed in loss, who have given the perdition their own selves and those belonging to them on the Day of Judgement.

C4589. This will be their thought, and their realized experience: 'after all, any troubles and sorrows, any persecutions and taunts which they suffered in the life of probation from the enemies of truth, were of no consequence; the real loss was that revealed at the Judgment at the restoration of true values; the wicked and the arrogant have lost their own souls, and have brought to perdition all who attached themselves to them and followed their evil ways; and this Penalty is one that will endure!

How much more real it is!

...أَلَا إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ فِي عَذَابٍ مُّقِيمٍ (٤٥)

Behold! truly the wrongdoers are in a lasting Penalty!"

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُم مِّنْ أَوْلِيَاء يَنصُرُونَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ...

46. And no protectors have they to help them, other than Allah:

C4590. The argument begun in verse 44 above is here rounded off.

'If once men finally cut themselves off from Allah's guidance and care, they will have no protection whatever. All their false objects of worship will only mislead them further and further. How they will wish the fact blotted out when they are in sight of Judgment, and vainly wish for time to be reversed! They will be in the Fire, while the men whom they despised and rejected will have reached the final Goal! For them there will be no such way!'.

...وَمَن يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن سَبِيلٍ (٤٦)

and for any whom Allah leaves to stray, there is no way (to the Goal).

اسْتَجِيبُوا لِرَبِّكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ...

47. Hearken ye to your Lord, before there come a Day which there will be no putting back, because of (the ordainment of) Allah!

C4591. The Day of Judgment is inevitable. Allah has ordained it, and it cannot in any way be put back.

...مَا لَكُم مِّن مَّلْجَإٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن نَّكِيرٍ (٤٧)

That Day there will be for you no place of refuge nor will there be for you any room for denial (of your sins)!

C4592. At Judgment no one can escape the consequences of his crimes or deeds. And no one can disavow them or deny them, or by any chance pretend that they do not apply to him.

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ...

48. If then they turn away, We have not sent thee as a guard over them.

C4593. The warning is now given, that men may repent and do good, and pray for Allah's Mercy and Grace. If the warning is not heeded or is rejected, the prophet of Allah is not responsible for bringing about the Penalty or for forcing people to come to the right Path. He is not a guard set over them to free them from the need of exercising their limited free-will. (R).

... إِنْ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ...

Thy duty is but to convey (the Message).

...وَإِنَّا إِذَا أَذَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا...

And truly, when We give man a taste of Mercy from Ourselves, He doth exult thereat,

C4594. Cf. 30:36.

It is a sad reflection that men, when they receive some gift out of Allah's Mercy, exult in their good fortune and attribute it to some merit in themselves, instead of to the Grace and Mercy of Allah, thus missing the real lesson of Life.

On the other hand, when they are in trouble, due to their own errors and shortcomings, they fall into despair and blame Allah, instead of blaming themselves. This is rank ingratitude. So they miss the true lesson of Life in that case also.

...وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ كَفُورٌ (٤٨)

but when some ill happens to him, on account of the deeds which His hands have sent forth, truly then is man ungrateful!

...لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاء

49. To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans).

C4595. Verses 49-50 deal, in their ordinary meaning, with Allah's creative power replete with knowledge and continued purpose, contrasted with man's instincts and groping after knowledge.

The mystery of sex and parenthood is referred to in a new fight. With reference to children, a parent is often spoken of as the "author" of their being. The growth of population and the proportion of males and females in it have various sociological and psychological implications; yet how little do parents really know about them?

If advancing knowledge threw light on what may be called the mechanical aspects of the question, the profounder problems touched by it are beyond the reach of man. Yet they are not governed by chance.

Allah has a meaning and purpose in all things, and His power is complete to carry out His purpose.

...يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاء إِنَاثًا وَيَهَبُ لِمَن يَشَاء الذُّكُورَ (٤٩)

He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan).

...أَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنَاثًا وَيَجْعَلُ مَن يَشَاء عَقِيمًا

50. Or He bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren whom He will:

C4596. To parents themselves it is a mystery why a male or female child is given at any birth, or how the

balance of the two sexes is made up in a family or in large groups of mankind, or why in some cases the womb is barren and the would be parents are denied the joys and responsibilities of parenthood.

But each individual human soul is precious in the Plan of Allah, and all these variations, besides their reactions on parents and on society, have a purpose to fulfil in the large Plan of Allah.

...إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ (٥٠)

for He is Full of knowledge and power.

... وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ

51. It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him...

C4597. This leads us on to the higher spiritual meaning of verses 49-50, as leading up to verses 51-53.

Man is but a speck in Allah's creation. His growth and family relationships are not by any means comparable to Allah's creative acts, whose various stages are referred to in n. 120 to 2:117, n. 916 to 6:94, and n. 923 to 6:98.

That being so in the mysteries of man's daily life, how much more profound is the contrast between man and Allah in the apprehension of the higher spiritual problems concerned with Revelation?

How can man be fit to speak to Allah?

He is not fit. But there are three ways in which Allah, in His infinite Mercy, communicates with man, as described in verses 51-53.

... إِلَّا وَحْيًا ...

... except by inspiration,

C4598. Allah is Most High, Most Wise: man is, in spite of his high destiny, often the lowest of the low (95:5). Yet Allah, out of His infinite Mercy and Grace, has bestowed His revelation on man.

How does it come about?

Three ways are mentioned:

- Wahyun, Inspiration;
- from behind a veil; and
- by the sending of a Messenger: see the notes following, Wahyun.

Inspiration, is interpreted to be of two kinds:

1. a suggestion thrown by Allah into the heart or mind of man, by which man understands the substance of the Message, whether it is a command or prohibition, or an explanation of a great truth; and
2. verbal or literal inspiration, by which the actual words of Allah are conveyed in human language. (R).

... أَوْ مِن وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ...

or from behind a veil,

C4599. Behind a veil: not of course a material veil, but the veil of Light. (R).

Muslim relates a tradition that the Prophet said:

> "His veil is Light: were He to withdraw it, then would the august splendours of His countenance surely consume everything that comes within His Sight." (R).

...أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ...

or by the sending of a Messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills:

C4600. Messenger: Rasul: the angel Gabriel, through whom the revelations were given to the Holy Prophet.

These spiritual visions, conveying the message of Revelation, are the basis of the Quran.

...إِنَّهُ عَلِيٌّ حَكِيمٌ (٥١)

for He is Most High, Most Wise.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ...

52. And thus have We, by Our command, sent **inspiration** to thee: thou knowest not (before) what was Revelation, and what was Faith;

C4601. Before the receipt of his mission in his fortieth year, the holy Prophet, though a man of steadfast virtue and purity and unflinching in his search for Truth, was yet unacquainted with Revelation in the highest sense of the term and with the certainty that comes from perfected Faith, or realized nearness to Allah.

Ruh, which I have here translated Inspiration has also been understood by some Commentators to refer to the angel Gabriel, the vehicle of Revelation.

The Light of the Quran made all things clear to man, and to the world.

...وَلَٰكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا...

but We have made the (Qur'án) a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will;

...وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٥٢)

and verily thou dost guide (men) to the Straight Way --

C4602. The Quran and the inspired Prophet who proclaimed it, are here identified. They were a Guide to men, showing the Straight Way.

This Way is described in various ways:

for example, see 1:6, and n. 22;

18:1-2, and notes 2326-27;

and 90:11-18.

صِرَاطِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

53. The Way of Allah, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth:

C4603. The most comprehensive description of the Straight Way is that it is the Way of Allah, the Way of the Universal Law; for Allah is the source, centre, and goal of all things in heaven and earth. Everything goes back to Him.

According to our own understanding we make out own laws, our own standards, and our own institutions. But the ultimate test of their validity or authority is Allah's Will, as revealed to us by His Revelation.

أَلَا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَصِيرُ الأُمُورُ (٥٣)...

Behold (how) all affairs tend towards Allah!



وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

But the Mercy of thy Lord is better than the&Inbsp; (wealth)&Inbsp; which they amass.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Zukhruf

الزُّخْرُف

Introduction and Summary

This is the fourth Surah of *Ha Mim* series of seven Surahs. For their Chronology and general theme see the Introduction to Surah 40.

this Surah deals with the contrasts between the real glory of Truth and Revelation and the false glitter of what people like to believe and worship. It cites the examples of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as exposing the False and holding up the truth. the keyword (Zukhruf, Gold Adornments) occurs in verse 38, but the idea occurs all through the Surah.

Summary- The Book of Revelation makes things clear, even though the ignorant and foolish mock at it and ignore Allah's Signs; it will last, while its rejecters will perish (43:1-25, and C. 213).

Abraham exposed the falsehood of traditional worship; the glitter and adornments of this world will not last: what was the end of Pharaoh in his arrogant fight with Moses? (43:26-56, and C. 214).

Jesus was a servant of Allah, but his sectarian followers raised false disputations about him; all is known to Allah, Whose Truth will shine, in spite of unfaith (43:57-89, and C.215).

C.213 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(43:1-25)

Revelation makes everlasting Truths
Clear: those who mock merely undo themselves,
Consider the Signs of Allah's gracious kindness
Around you, and glorify Him; attribute not
Unworthy qualities nor any companions
To the One True God. Seek Truth in worship
More than mere ancestral ways,
And shut not out Revelation's Light.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim.

C4604. These Abbreviated Letters are discussed in Introduction to Surah 40.

وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢)

2. By the Book that makes things clear --

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٣)

3. We have made it a **Qur'án in Arabic**, that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom).

C4605. Cf. 42:7, n. 4533.

وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيٌّ حَكِيمٌ (٤)

4. And verily, it is in the Mother of the **Book**, in Our Presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom.

C4606. Cf. 3:7, n. 347: and 13:39, n. 1864.

The Mother of the Book, the Foundation of Revelation, the Preserved Tablet (Lauh Mahfuz. 85:22), is the core or essence of revelation, the original principle or fountain-head of Allah's Eternal and Universal Law. From this fountain-head are derived all streams of knowledge and wisdom, that flow through Time and feed the intelligence of created minds.

The Mother of the Book is in Allah's own Presence, and its dignity and wisdom are more than all we can think of in the spiritual world.

أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا أَن كُنتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِينَ (٥)

5. Shall We then take away the Message from you and repel (you), for that ye are a people transgressing beyond bounds?

C4607. In vouchsafing Revelation, what an inestimable Mercy has Allah conferred on mankind! Yet so many deluded souls are ungrateful, and ignore or oppose its teaching. If it were not for His attributes of Forgiveness and Forbearing He would be justified in withdrawing that Light, but He continues to shed it, that all who will may come and be blessed by it.

وَكَمْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن نَّبِيٍّ فِي الْأَوَّلِينَ (٦)

6. But how many were the prophets We sent amongst the peoples of old?

C4608. In spite of, or because of, man's obstinate and rebellious nature, Allah sent prophet after prophet to the

peoples of old, but there was among them always a party that ridiculed them and treated Allah's Signs as naught.

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ (٧)

7. And never came there a prophet to them but they mocked him.

فَأَهْلَكْنَا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُم بَطْشًا وَمَضَىٰ مَثَلُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٨)

8. So We destroyed (them) -- stronger in power than these -- and (thus) has passed on the Parable of the peoples of old.

C4609. The result of rebellion was destruction. And the pagan Makkan generation contemporary with the Prophet is reminded that the peoples of old who were destroyed were, many of them, more powerful than they, and that they, in disobeying Allah's Law, were inviting the same fate for themselves. The events of the past have become examples for the present and the future.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ...

9. If thou wert to question them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?'

C4610. Cf. 29:61 and n. 3493; and 31:25 and n. 3613.

This class of men acknowledges Allah's Power and Allah's Knowledge or Wisdom, but do not realise Allah's infinite Mercy and care for His creatures.

... لَيَقُولُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ (٩)

They would be sure to reply,

'They were created by (Him), the Exalted in Power, Full of knowledge' --

C4611. Note the beautiful rhetorical figure of speech here.

The reply of the inconsistent men who do not follow Allah's Law is turned against themselves. When they acknowledge Allah's Power and Knowledge, their speech

is interrupted, and the concomitant qualities of Allah's Mercy and care of His creatures, with pointed reference to the inconsistent ones themselves, is set out in eloquent terms, as completing what they themselves had said, and the right course of conduct is pointed out to them (verses 10-14).

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ (١٠)

10. (Yea, the same that)

C4612. See last note.

has made for you the earth (like a carpet) spread out, and has made for you roads (and channels) therein, in order that ye may find guidance (on the way);

C4613. Cf. 20:53 and n. 2576.

Mihad, a carpet or bed spread out, implies not only freedom of movement but rest also.

The **'roads and channels'** carry out the idea of communications and include land routes, sea routes, and airways.

وَالَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ ...

11. That sends down (from time to time) rain from the sky **in due measure**;

C4614. In due measure: i.e., according to needs, as measured by local as well as universal considerations. This applies to normal rainfall:

floods and droughts are abnormal conditions, and may be called unusual manifestations of His power, fulfilling some special purpose that we may or may not understand.

... فَأَنشَرْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا كَذَٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ (١١)

and We raise to life therewith a land that is dead; even so will ye be raised (from the dead) --

C4615. The clause **'And We raise** ... (from the dead)' is parenthetical. Cf. 35:9, n. 3881.

Note the transition from the third to the first person, to mark the Resurrection as a special act of Allah as distinguished from the ordinary processes of nature ordained by Allah.

وَالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا ...

12. That has created pairs in all things,

C4616. Cf. n. 2578 to 20:53. Also see 36:36, n. 3981.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُونَ (١٢)

and has made for you ships and cattle on which ye ride,

C4617. By analogy all means of transport, including horses, camels, ships, steamers, railways, aeroplanes, airships, etc.

The domestication of animals as well as the invention of mechanical means of transport require a skill and ingenuity in man, which are referred to Allah as His gifts or endowments to man.

لِتَسْتَوُوا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ

وَتَقُولُوا...

13. In order that ye may sit firm and square on their backs, and when so seated, ye may celebrate the (kind) favor of your Lord, and say,

C4618. See last note.

People of understanding attribute all good to its true and original source viz.: Allah.

...سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ (١٣)

"Glory to Him Who has subjected these to Our (use), for We could never have accomplished this (by ourselves).

وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنقَلِبُونَ (١٤)

14. "And to Our Lord, surely, Must We turn back!"

C4619. Men of understanding, every time they take a journey on earth, are reminded of that more momentous

journey which they are taking on the back of Time to Eternity.

Have they tamed Time to their lawful use, or do they allow Time to run away with them wildly to where they know not?

Their goal is Allah, and their thoughts are ever with Allah.

وَجَعَلُوا لَهُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ جُزْءًا...

15. Yet they attribute to some of His servants a share with Him (in His godhead)!

C4620. As a contrast to the men of true understanding are the ungrateful blasphemous creatures, who offer a share to others besides Allah! They imagine sons and daughters to Allah, and forget the true lesson of the whole of Creation, which points to the Unity of Allah. This theme is further developed in the following Section.

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٥)

Truly is man a blasphemous ingrate avowed!

Section 2

أَمِ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنَاتٍ وَأَصْفَاكُم بِالْبَنِينَ (١٦)

16. What!

Has He taken Daughters out of what He Himself creates, and granted to you sons for choice?

C4621. To imagine goddesses (female gods) or mothers or daughters to Allah was particularly blasphemous in the mouths of people who held the female sex in contempt. Such were the pagan Arabs, and such (it is to be feared) are some of the moderns. They wince when a daughter is born to them and hanker after sons. With that mentality, how can they attribute daughters to Allah?

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ (١٧)

17. When news is **brought** to one of them of (the birth of) what he sets up as a likeness to (Allah) Most Gracious, his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief!

C4622. Cf. 16:57-59 and notes.

With scathing irony it is pointed out that what they hate and are ashamed of for themselves they attribute to Allah!

أَوَمَن يُنَشَّأُ فِي الْحِلْيَةِ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ (١٨)

18. Is then one **brought up among trinkets,** and unable to give a clear account in a dispute (to be associated with Allah)?

C4623. The softer sex is usually brought up among trinkets and ornaments, and, on account of the retiring modesty which for the sex is a virtue, is unable to stand up boldly in a fight and give clear indications of the will to win.

Is that sort of quality to be associated with Allah?

وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبَادُ الرَّحْمَٰنِ إِنَاثًا...

19. And they make into females angels who themselves serve Allah.

C4624. Angels for grace and purity may be compared to the most graceful and the purest forms we know. But it is wrong to attribute sex to them. They are servants and messengers of Allah and so far from being rivals seeking worship, are always engaged in devotion and service.

If any persons invent blasphemies about Allah, such blasphemies will form a big blot in their Book of Deeds, and they will be called to account for them.

...أَشَهِدُوا خَلْقَهُمْ...

Did they witness their creation?

سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَيُسْأَلُونَ (١٩)

Their evidence will be recorded, and they will be called to account!

وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ الرَّحْمَنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاهُم...

20. ("Ah!") they say,

"If it had been the Will of (Allah) Most Gracious, We should not have worshipped such (deities)!"

C4625. Worsted in argument they resort to a dishonest sarcasm. 'We worship these deities: if Allah does not wish us to do so, why does He not prevent us?'

In throwing the responsibility on Allah, they ignore the limited free-will on which their whole life is based. They are really playing with truth. They are arguing against their own knowledge. They have no authority in any scripture, and indeed they are so slippery that they hold fast to no scripture at all.

...مَّا لَهُم بِذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ (٢٠)

of that they have no knowledge!

They Do nothing but lie!

C4626. Cf. 6:116.

أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَهُم بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ (٢١)

21. What!

have We given them a Book before this, to which they are holding fast?

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٢٢)

22. Nay!

they say:

"We found our fathers following a certain religion, and We do guide ourselves by their footsteps."

C4627. Then comes the argument about ancestral custom, which was repudiated by Abraham (see verses 26-28 below).

Indeed a good reply to ancestral custom in the case of the Arabs was the example of Abraham, the True in Faith, for Abraham was the common ancestor of the Arabs and the Israelites.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا...

23. Just in the same way, whenever We sent a Warner before thee to any people, the wealthy ones among them said:

C4628. It is some privileged position, and not ancestral custom, which is really at the bottom of much falsehood and hypocrisy in the world. This has been again and again in religious history.

...إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ (٢٣)

"We found our fathers following a certain religion, and We will certainly follow in their footsteps."

قَالَ أَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكُم بِأَهْدَىٰ مِمَّا وَجَدتُّمْ عَلَيْهِ آبَاءكُمْ...

24. He said:

"What! even if I brought you better guidance than that which ye found your fathers following?"

C4629. The Warner or messenger pointed out the merits and the truth of his teaching, and how superior it was to what they called their ancestral customs. But they denied his mission itself or the validity of any such mission. In other words they did not believe in inspiration or revelation, and went on in their evil ways, with the inevitable result that they brought themselves to destruction.

قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٢٤)

They said: "For us, We deny that ye (prophets) are sent (on a mission at all)."

فَانتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ...

25. So We exacted retribution from them:

...فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٥)

now see what was the end of those who rejected (Truth)!

C.214 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(43:26-56)

If the Arabs hark back to ancestry, why not
Accept the Faith of Abraham the True?
He joined not gods with Allah. Spiritual
Worth is measured by other things
Than gold or silver or the adornments
Of the world. These are but things of the hour.
The lasting gifts are those of the Hereafter.
If Israel goes back to Moses, how he
Was mocked by Pharaoh in his pride
Of power! Yet Pharaoh and his deluded
People perished; so ends the pomp
And power and vanity of this world!

Section 3

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ ...

26. Behold! Abraham said to his father and his people:

C4630. The plea of ancestral ways is refuted by the example of Abraham, in two ways:

- he gave up the ancestral cults followed by his father and people, and followed the true Way, even at some sacrifice to himself; and
- he was an ancestor of the Arabs, and if the Arabs stood on ancestral ways, why should they not follow their good ancestor Abraham, rather than their bad ancestors who fell into evil? See n. 4627 above.

The incident in Abraham's story referred to here will be found in 21:51-70.

... إِنَّنِي بَرَاء مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢٦)

"I do indeed clear myself of what ye worship:

إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ (٢٧)

27. "(I worship) only Him Who made me, and He will certainly guide me."

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقِبِهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٢٨)

28. And he left it as **a Word** to endure among those who came after him, that they may turn back (to Allah).

C4631. A Word: i.e., the Gospel of Unity, viz.,: "I worship only Him who originated me", as in verse 27. This was his teaching, and this was his legacy to those who followed him. He hoped that they would keep it sacred, and uphold the standard of Unity.

Cf. 37:108-111.

بَلْ مَتَّعْتُ هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ وَرَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢٩)

29. Yea, **I have given** the good things of this life to these (men) and their fathers, until the Truth has come to them, and a Messenger making things clear.

C4632. Note the first person singular, as showing Allah's personal solicitude and care for the descendants of Abraham in both branches.

The context here refers to the prosperity enjoyed by Makkah and the Makkans until they rejected the truth of Islam when it was preached in their midst by a messenger whose Message was as clear as the light of the sun.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ وَإِنَّا بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (٣٠)

30. But when the Truth came to them, they said:

"This is sorcery, and We do reject it."

C4633. When the pagan Makkans could not understand the wonderful power and authority with which the holy Prophet preached, they called his God given influence sorcery!

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ (٣١)

31. Also, they say:

"Why is not this Qur'án sent down to some leading man in either of the two (Chief) cities?"

C4634. The world judges by its own low standards. From a worldly point of view, the holy Prophet was poor and an orphan. Why, they thought, should he be so richly endowed in spiritual knowledge and power? If such a gift had to come to a man among them, it was the right (they foolishly said) of one of the chiefs in either the sacred city of Makkah, or the fertile garden-city of Taif!

أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ...

32. Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of thy Lord?

C4635. That is, spiritual gifts, those connected with Revelation. What audacity or folly in them to claim to divide or distribute them among themselves?

They may think they are distributing the good things of this world among themselves. In a sense that may be true, even here, their own power and initiative are very limited. Even here it is Allah's Will on which all depends. In His wisdom Allah allows some to grow in power or riches, and command work from others, and various relative gradations are established. Men scramble for these good things of this world, but they are of no value compared to the spiritual gifts.

...نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

It is We Who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of this world:

...وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا...

and We raise some of them above others in ranks, so that some may command work from others.

...وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (٣٢)

But the Mercy of thy Lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass.

وَلَوْلَا أَن يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَٰنِ...

33. And were it not that (all) men might become of one (evil) way of life, We would provide, for everyone that blasphemes against (Allah) Most Gracious,

C4636. So little value is attached in the spiritual world to silver or gold, or worldly ranks or adornments, that they would freely be at the disposal of everyone who denied or blasphemed Allah, were it not that in that case there would be too great temptation placed in the way of men, for they might all scramble to sell their spiritual life for wealth!

They might have silver roofs and stair-ways, silver doors and thrones, and all kinds of adornments of gold. But Allah does not allow too great a temptation to be placed in the path of men. He distributes these things differently, some to unjust men, and some to just men, in various degrees, so that the possession of these is no test either of an unjust or a just life. His wisdom searches out motives far more subtle and delicate than any we are even aware of.

لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّن فِضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ (٣٣)...

silver roofs for their houses and (silver) stair-ways on which to go up.

وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِؤُونَ (٣٤)

34. And (silver) doors to their houses, and thrones (of silver) on which they could recline,

وَزُخْرُفًا...

35. And also adornments of gold.

C4637. Adornments of gold. the keyword to this Surah.

All false glitter and adornments of this world are as naught. They more often hinder than help.

...وَإِن كُلُّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ...

But all this were nothing but conveniences of the present life:

... وَالْآخِرَةُ عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٥)

the Hereafter, in the sight of thy Lord, is for the Righteous.

Section 4

وَمَن يَعْشُ عَن ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ (٣٦)

36. If anyone withdraws **himself from remembrance of** (Allah) Most Gracious, We appoint for him an evil one, to be an intimate companion to him.

C4638. If men deliberately put away the remembrance of Allah from their minds, the natural consequence, under Allah's decree, is that they join on with evil. Like consorts with like. We can generalize evil in the abstract, but it takes concrete shape in our life- companions.

وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّونَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ (٣٧)

37. Such (evil ones) really hinder **them** from the Path, but they think that **they** are being guided aright!

C4639. The downward course in evil is rapid. But the most tragic consequence is that evil persuades its victims to believe that they are pursuing good. They think evil to be their good. They go deeper and deeper into the mire, and become more and more callous.

"Them" and **"they"** represent the generic plural of anyone who "withdraws himself from ... Allah" (see last verse).

حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءنَا قَالَ ...

38. At length, when (such a one) comes to Us, he says (to his evil companion):

C4640. If ever the presence of Allah is felt, or at the time of Judgment, a glimmering of truth comes to the deceived soul, and it cries to its evil companion in its agony, "Would that I had never come across thee! Would that we were separated poles apart!" But it cannot shake off evil. By deliberate choice it had put itself in its snare.

... يَا لَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ ...

"Would that between me and thee were the distance of East and West!"

C4641. Distance of East and West: literally, 'distance of the two Easts'.

Most Commentators understand in this sense, but some construe the phrase as meaning the distance of the extreme points of the rising of the sun, between the summer solstice and the winter solstice. Cf. n. 4034 to 37:5.

A good equivalent idiom in English would be "poles apart", for they could never meet.

... فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِينُ (٣٨)

Ah! Evil is the companion (indeed)!

وَلَن يَنفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ إِذ ظَّلَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ (٣٩)

39. When ye have done wrong, it will avail you nothing, that day, that ye shall be partners in punishment!

C4642. All partners in evil will certainly share in the punishment, but that is no consolation to any individual soul. Evil desires the evil of others, but that does not diminish its own torment, or get rid of the personal responsibility of each individual soul.

أَفَأَنتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ أَوْ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ ...

40. Canst thou then make the deaf to hear, or give direction to the blind

C4643. Cf. 30:52-53.

The evil go headlong into sin, and sink deeper and deeper until their spiritual faculties are deadened, and no outside help can bring them back. Allah's grace they have rejected.

... وَمَن كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٤٠)

or to such as (wander) in manifest error?

C4644. There is hope for a person who wanders in quest of truth, and even for one who wanders through mistake or by weakness of will. But there is none for one who, by deliberate choice, plunges into **"manifest error"**, i.e., error which any one can see.

فَإِمَّا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَإِنَّا مِنْهُم مُّنتَقِمُونَ (٤١)

41. Even if We take **thee** away, We shall be sure to exact retribution from them.

C4645. Cf. 8:30: "how the Unbelievers plotted against thee, to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee out (of thy home)".

They were always plotting against the holy Prophet in his Makkan period. But even if their plots had succeeded against human beings, they could not defeat Allah's Plan, nor escape the just punishment of their deeds.

Cf. also 10:46, and n. 1438.

أَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِي وَعَدْنَاهُمْ فَإِنَّا عَلَيْهِم مُّقْتَدِرُونَ (٤٢)

42. Or We shall show thee that (accomplished) which We have promised them:

for verily We shall prevail over them.

فَاسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِي أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ...

43. So hold thou fast to the Revelation sent down to thee:

C4646. Let the wicked rage, say what they like, or do their worst: the prophet of Allah is encouraged to go forward steadfastly in the Light given him, for he is on a Path that leads straight to Allah. (R).

إِنَّكَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٤٣)...

verily thou art on Straight Way.

وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ وَسَوْفَ تُسْأَلُونَ (٤٤)

44. The (Qur'án) is indeed the **Message**, for thee and for thy people; and soon shall ye (all) be brought to account.

C4647. Dhikrun: Message, Remembrance, Cause of remembrance, Memorial. Title for remembrance to posterity.

Thus two meanings emerge, not necessarily mutually exclusive.

- The Quran brings a Message of Truth and Guidance to the Prophet, and his people;
- the revelation of the Quran raises the rank of the Prophet, and the people among whom, and in whose language, it was promulgated, making them worthy of remembrance in the world's history for all time.

But the honour also carried its responsibilities. All who hear it must give an account of how far they profit by it spiritually.

وَاسْأَلْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رُّسُلِنَا ...

45. And question thou Our **messengers** whom We sent before thee;

C4648. That is, by examining their Message, and asking the learned among their real followers. It will be found that no Religion really teaches the worship of other than Allah.

... أَجَعَلْنَا مِن دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ آلِهَةً يُعْبَدُونَ (٤٥)

did We appoint any deities other than (Allah) Most Gracious, to be worshipped?

Section 5

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ ...

46. We did send **Moses** aforetime, with Our Signs, to Pharaoh and his Chiefs:

C4649. For the story of Moses in detail, see 7:103-137, but especially 7:104, 130-136.

... فَقَالَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٦)

he said, "I am an messenger of the Lord of the Worlds."

فَلَمَّا جَاءهُم بِآيَاتِنَا إِذَا هُم مِّنْهَا يَضْحَكُونَ (٤٧)

47. But when he came to them with Our Signs, behold, they ridiculed them.

C4650. For the mockery of Moses and his Signs see 17:101; also below, 43:49, and 52-53.

وَمَا نُرِيهِم مِّنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أُخْتِهَا...

48. We showed them **Sign** after Sign, each grater then its fellow,

C4651. Moses showed them nine Clear Signs: see n. 1091 to 7:133; also 17:101.

Each one of them in its own setting and circumstances was greater than any of its "Sister" Signs.

The object was if possible to reclaim as many Egyptians as possible from their defiance of Allah.

...وَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٤٨)

and We seized them with Punishment, in order that they might turn (to Us).

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا السَّاحِرُ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِندَكَ إِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُونَ (٤٩)

49. And they said,

"O thou Sorcerer! invoke thy Lord for us according to His covenant with thee; for We shall truly accept guidance."

C4652. This speech is half a mockery, and half a ruse. In spite of their unbelief, they had fear in their minds, and in order to stop the plagues, one after another, they promised to obey Allah, and when the particular plague was removed, they again became obdurate.

See 7:133-135.

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ إِذَا هُمْ يَنكُثُونَ (٥٠)

50. But when We removed the Penalty from them, behold, they broke their word.

وَنَادَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَيْسَ لِي مُلْكُ مِصْرَ...

51. And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people, saying:
"O my people! does not the dominion of Egypt belong to me,

...وَهَٰذِهِ الْأَنْهَارُ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِي...

(witness) these streams flowing underneath my (palace)?

C4653. The **waw** here in Arabic is the **Waw haliya**:

the abundant streams from the Nile flowing beneath his palace being evidence of his power, prosperity, and sovereignty.

The Nile made (and makes) Egypt, and the myth of the god Osiris was a compound of the myths of the Nile and the sun. The Pharaoh, therefore, as commanding the Nile, commanded the gods who personified Egypt. He boasted of water, and he perished in water,-a fitting punishment!

...أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٥١)

What! see ye not then?

أَمْ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هَٰذَا الَّذِي هُوَ مَهِينٌ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ (٥٢)

52. "Am I not better than this (Moses), who is a contemptible **wretch** and can scarcely express himself clearly?

C4654. Being a despised Israelite in any case, and having further an impediment in his speech.

See 20:27 and notes 2552-53.

فَلَوْلَا أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِّن ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ مُقْتَرِنِينَ (٥٣)

53. "Then why are not gold bracelets bestowed on him
or (why) come (not) with him angels accompanying him in procession?"

C4655. Gold bracelets and gold chains were possibly among the insignia of royalty. In any case they betokened wealth, and the materialists judge a man's worth by his wealth and his following and equipage.

So Pharaoh wanted to see Moses, if he had any position in the spiritual kingdom, invested with gold bracelets, and followed by a great train of angels as his Knight-companions!

The same kind of proofs was demanded by the materialist Quraish of our holy Prophet. These were puerilities, but such puerilities go down with the crowd. Barring a few Egyptians who believed in Allah and in the Message of Moses, the rest of Pharaoh's entourage followed Pharaoh in his pursuit of revenge, and were drowned in the Red Sea.

فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهُ فَأَطَاعُوهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٥٤)

54. Thus did he make fools of his people, and they obeyed him:
Truly were they a people rebellious (against Allah).

فَلَمَّا آسَفُونَا انتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ ...

55. When at length they provoked Us, We exacted retribution from them,

C4656. Allah is patient, and gives many and many opportunities to the most hardened sinners for repentance. But at length comes a time when His justice is provoked, and the inevitable punishment follows.

... فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٥٥)

and We drowned them all --

C4657. Cf. 7:136.

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ سَلَفًا وَمَثَلًا لِلْآخِرِينَ (٥٦)

56. And We made them (a people) of the **Past** and an Example to later ages.

C4658. Pharaoh and his hosts were blotted out, and became as a tale of the past.

Their story is an instructive warning and example to future generations.

The later course of Egyptian religion after the Exodus is referred to in Appendix V.

C.215 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(43:57-89)

If Christians go back to Jesus, he
Was but a man and a servant of Allah:
He came to still the jarring sects,
Not to create a new one. He preached
The One True God, his Lord. So give up
Disputing, and join in devotion to Allah.
That is the Way to the Garden of Bliss,
But the opposite leads to the Fire. Beware!
The Truth has come, and Allah knows how you
Receive it. He is the Lord of power and mercy.
The Truth must prevail: resist it not.

Section 6

وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا إِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّونَ (٥٧)

57. When (Jesus) **the son of Mary** is held up as an example, behold, thy people raise a clamor thereat (in ridicule)!

C4659. Jesus was a man, and a prophet to the Children of Israel, "though his own received him not."

Some of the churches that were founded after him worshipped him as "God" and as "the son of God", as do the Trinitarian churches to the present day. The orthodox churches did so in the time of the holy Prophet.

When the doctrine of Unity was renewed, and the false worship of others besides Allah was strictly prohibited, all false gods were condemned, e.g., at 21:98.

The pagan Arabs looked upon Jesus as being in the same category as their false gods, and could not see why a foreign cult, or a foreign god, as they viewed him, should be considered better than their own gods or idols.

There was no substance in this, but mere mockery, and verbal quibbling. Jesus was one of the greater prophets: he was not a god, nor was he responsible for the quibbling subtleties of the Athanasian Creed.

وَقَالُوا أَآلِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ أَمْ هُوَ مَا ضَرَبُوهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جَدَلًا...

58. And they say, "Are Our gods best, or He?"
This they set forth to thee, only by way of disputation:

...بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُونَ (٥٨)

yea, they are a contentious people.

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٥٩)

59. He was no more than a servant:
We granted Our favor to him, and We made him an example to the Children of Israel.

C4660. A reference to the limited mission of the prophet Jesus, whose Gospel to the Jews only survives in uncertain fragmentary forms.

وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَجَعَلْنَا مِنكُم مَّلَائِكَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ يَخْلُفُونَ (٦٠)

60. **And if it were Our Will,** We could make angels from amongst you, succeeding each other on the earth.

C4661. If it were said that the birth of Jesus without a father sets him above other prophets, the creation of angels without either father or mother would set them still higher, especially as angels do not eat and drink and are not subject to physical laws. But angels are not higher.

... وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ

61. And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment):

C4662. This is understood to refer to the second coming of Jesus in the Last Days before the Resurrection, when he will destroy the false doctrines that pass under his name, and prepare the way for the universal acceptance of Islam, the Gospel of Unity and Peace, the Straight Way of the Quran.

... فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُونِ...

therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me:

...هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٦١)

this is a Straight Way.

وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (٦٢)

62. Let not the Evil One hinder you: for he is to you an enemy avowed.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ عِيسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالَ...

63. When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said:

...قَدْ جِئْتُكُم بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِأُبَيِّنَ لَكُم بَعْضَ الَّذِي تَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ...

"Now have I come to you with **Wisdom**, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which ye dispute:

C4663. True wisdom consists in understanding the unity of the Divine purpose and the Unity of the Divine Personality. The man Jesus came to reconcile the jarring sects in Israel, and his true teaching was just the same as that which was expounded in a wider form by Islam. He did not claim to be God: why should not the Christians follow the doctrine of Unity rather than what has become their ancestral and traditional custom?

...فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ (٦٣)

therefore fear Allah and obey me.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ

64. "For Allah; He is my Lord and your Lord: so worship ye Him:

C4664.

- In verses 26-28 an appeal is made to the pagan Arabs, that Islam is their own religion, the religion of Abraham their ancestor;
- in verses 46-54, an appeal is made to the Jews that Islam is the same religion as was taught by Moses,

and that they should not allow their leaders to make fools of them;

- in verses 57-65 an appeal is made to the Christians that Islam is the same religion as was taught by Jesus, and that they should give up their sectarian attitude and follow the universal religion, which shows the Straight Way.

هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ (٦٤) ...

this is a Straight Way."

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِن بَيْنِهِمْ...

65. But sects from among themselves fell into disagreement:

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ (٦٥)...

then woe to the wrongdoers, from the Penalty of a Grievous Day!

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَن تَأْتِيَهُم بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٦٦)

66. Do they only wait for the Hour --

that it should come on them all of a sudden, while they perceive not?

C4665. Cf. 12:107.

What is there to wait for?

The Hour of Judgment may come at any moment. It will come all of a sudden before they realise that it is on them. They should make up their minds to give up misleading disputations and come to the Straight Path.

الْأَخِلَّاء يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ (٦٧)

67. Friends on that Day will be foes, one to another,

except the Righteous.

C4666. The hatred and spite, which are associated with evil, will be felt with peculiar intensity in that period of agony. That itself would be a punishment, from which the righteous will be free. The righteous will have passed all perils of falling into wrong frames of mind.

Section 7

يَا عِبَادِ ...

68. My devotees!

C4667. The devotion and service to Allah result in the soul being made free from all fear and sorrow, as regards the past, present, and future, if we may take an analogy from Time for a timeless state. Such devotion and service are shown by

- believing in Allah's Signs, which means understanding and accepting His Will, and
- by merging our will completely in His universal Will, which means being in tune with the Infinite, and acting in all things to further His Kingdom.

... لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَا أَنتُمْ تَحْزَنُونَ (٦٨)

no fear shall be on you that Day, nor shall ye grieve --

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ (٦٩)

69. (Being) those who have believed in Our Signs and bowed (their wills to Ours) in Islam.

ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ أَنتُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُونَ (٧٠)

70. Enter ye the Garden, ye and your wives, in (beauty and) rejoicing.

C4668. The **Garden** is the type of all that is beautiful to eye, mind, and soul, all that is restful and in tune, a complete state of bliss, such as we can scarcely conceive of in this troubled world.

Several metaphors indicate how we can try to picture that bliss to ourselves in "this muddy vesture of decay."

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِصِحَافٍ مِّن ذَهَبٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ

الْأَنفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ ...

71. To them will be passed round, dishes and goblets of gold:

there will be there all that the souls could desire, all that the eyes could delight in:

C4669. We shall have all our neat and dear ones ("wives") with us: perfected Love will not be content with Self, but like a note of music will find its melody in communion with the others. The richest and most beautiful vessels will minister to our purified desires, and give complete and eternal satisfaction to our souls in every way.

...وَأَنتُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٧١)

and ye shall abide therein (for aye).

وَتِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٧٢)

72. Such will be the Garden of which ye are **made heirs** for your (good) deeds (in life).

C4670. We shall be there, not as strangers, or temporary guests, but as heirs,-made heirs in eternity because of the good lives we had led on earth.

... لَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ

73. Ye shall have therein abundance of **fruit**,

C4671. The **"fruit"** here links on with the last words in the last verse (72), "ye are made heirs for your (good) deeds (in life)".

It is not a doctrine of "rewards", strictly so called.

A reward is measured by merit, but here the bliss is beyond all merits or deserts. It is a doctrine of works and their fruits: every deed must have its inevitable consequences.

At first sight it may be compared to the doctrine of "Karma". but it differ from it in postulating Allah's unbounded Mercy, and the efficacy of Repentance. (R).

... مِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٧٣)

from which ye shall have satisfaction.

C4672. "Shall eat". But the word **akala** is used in many places in the comprehensive sense of "enjoy", **"have satisfaction"**. For example, see n. 776 to 5:66.

Cf. also 7:19 and n. 1004.

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي عَذَابِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ (٧٤)

74. The Sinners will be in the Punishment of Hell,
to dwell therein (for aye):

لَا يُفَتَّرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ (٧٥)

75. Nowise will the (punishment) be lightened for them, and in despair will they be there overwhelmed.

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ ...

76. Nowise shall We be unjust to them:

C4673. The wrong-doers suffer not because Allah is unjust or cruel, nor as a deterrent to others, for the probationary period will then have passed, but because their evil deeds must bear their inevitable fruit. Allah's Grace was ever ready to offer opportunities for Repentance and Forgiveness. But they rejected them. They were unjust to themselves. This is complementary to the doctrine of works and their fruits, as explained in n. 4671 above.

... وَلَكِن كَانُوا هُمُ الظَّالِمِينَ (٧٦)

but it is they who have been unjust themselves.

وَنَادَوْا يَا مَالِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ...

77. They will cry:
"O Malik! would that thy Lord put and end to us!"

C4674. Malik: The name of the Angel in charge of Hell.

...قَالَ إِنَّكُم مَّاكِثُونَ (٧٧)

He will say, "Nay, but ye shall abide!"

C4675. Cf. 20:74.

Annihilation is better than agony. But wrong-doers cannot destroy the "fruits" of their actions, by asking for annihilation.

لَقَدْ جِئْنَاكُم بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ (٧٨)

78. Verily We have brought the truth to you: but most of you have a hatred for Truth.

C4676. We come back now to the Present,-primarily to the time when Islam was being preached in Makkah, but by analogy the present time or any time.

Truth is often bitter to the taste of those who live on Falsehoods, and Shams and profit by them. They hate the Truth, and plot against it. But will they succeed? See next verse and note.

أَمْ أَبْرَمُوا أَمْرًا ...

79. What!

have they settled some Plan (among themselves)?

C4677. Men cannot settle the high affairs of the universe. If they plot against the Truth, the Truth will destroy them, just as, if they accept the Truth, the Truth will make them free. It is Allah Who disposes of affairs.

... فَإِنَّا مُبْرِمُونَ (٧٩)

But it is We Who settle things.

أَمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُم...

80. Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private counsels?

C4678. However secretly men may plot, everything is known to Allah. His Recording Angels are by, at all times and in all places, to prepare a Record of their Deeds for their own conviction when the time comes for Judgment.

...بَلَى وَرُسُلُنَا لَدَيْهِمْ يَكْتُبُونَ (٨٠)

Indeed (We do), and Our Messengers are by them, to record.

قُلْ إِن كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدٌ فَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْعَابِدِينَ (٨١)

81. Say:

"If (Allah) Most Gracious had a son, I would be the first to worship."

C4679. The prophet of Allah does not object to true worship in any form. But it must be true: it must not superstitiously attribute derogatory things to Allah, or foster false ideas.

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ ...

82. Glory to the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne (of Authority)!

C4680. Cf. 7:54 and n. 1032.

All Power, Authority, Knowledge, and Truth are with Allah. He neither begets nor is begotten. Glory to Him!

... عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (٨٢)

(He is free) from the things they attribute (to Him)!

فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٨٣)

83. So leave them to babble and play (with vanities) until they meet that **Day of theirs,** which they have been promised.

C4681. That Day of theirs: they had their Day on earth;

they will have a different sort of Day in the Hereafter, according to the promise of Allah about the Resurrection and Judgment, or perhaps about Retribution in this very life! So leave them to play about with their fancies and vanities. Truth must eventually prevail!

وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ...

84. It is He Who is Allah in heaven and Allah on earth;

...وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨٤)

and He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge.

وَتَبَارَكَ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

85. And blessed is He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all between them:

C4682. We glorify Allah, and we call His name blessed, because He has not only supreme power and authority, but because we shall return to Him and see "the Light of His Countenance" (30:38).

...وَعِندَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٨٥)

with Him is the knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment):

And to Him shall ye be brought back.

وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ الشَّفَاعَةَ...

86. And those whom they invoke besides Allah have no power of intercession;

...إِلَّا مَن شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (٨٦)

only he who bears witness to the Truth, and they know (him).

C4683. The classical Commentators construe this clause differently. According to their construction, the clause would be translated,

> "except those who bear witness to the Truth, and with full knowledge."

"Truth" they would construe to be the Gospel of Unity.

According to them, while idols and false gods have no power of intercession, person like Jesus, who is falsely worshipped by his misguided followers, but who himself preached the Gospel of unity with full understanding, will have the power of intercession.

This implies that we construe the singular *man shahida* to refer to the same person or persons as the plural *hum ya'lamun*.

This difficulty is removed if we construe as I have translated it. In that case

> "he who bears witness to truth" is the holy Prophet, who came to renew the Gospel of Unity, and
>
> "they know (him)" would refer to the Quraysh, amongst whom he was brought up and among whom he earned the reputation of being a man of probity (Amin).

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ ...

87. If thou ask them, Who Created them, they will certainly say, Allah:

C4684. Cf. 31:25, and n. 3613; and 39:38, and n. 4299.

... فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٨٧)

how then are they deluded away (from the Truth)?

... وَقِيلِهِ

88. (Allah has knowledge) of the (Prophet's) cry,

C4685. Commentators are divided in opinion as to the construction. The best opinion is that which I have adopted, referring back **qilihi** as a genitive governed by **'ilm** in verse 85.

An alternative construction is to construe the *waw* here as the *waw qasamiyah*: in that case we should have to suppose some other clause as understood, in order to complete the sense.

... يَارَبِّ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٨٨)

"O my Lord! truly these are a people who will not believe!"

C4686. The Prophet was much troubled in mind by the Unfaith of the Quraish: 18:6.

He is here told to leave them alone for a time, for the Truth must soon prevail.

... فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ

89. But turn away from them, and say

"Peace!"

C4687. Cf. 25:63, and n. 3123.

... فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٨٩)

but soon shall they know!

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Verily, We have made this (Qur'án) easy, in thy tongue, in order that they may give heed.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Dukhan

الدُّخَّان

Introduction and Summary

For the chronology and the general theme of the Surahs of *Ha Mim* series of which this is the fifth, see the Introduction to Surah 40.

The theme of this particular Surah is how worldly pride and power are humbled in the dust if they resist spiritual forces, and how Evil and Good find their true setting in the Hereafter.

The title of Dukhan occurs in verse 10. It means smoke or mist, and may refer to a drought or famine, as explained in the notes to the verse.

Summary- Revelation explains clearly how worldly pride and arrogance may come to naught, even at long odds, against spiritual truths (44:1-29, and C. 216).

A people may be given all blessings and may fail in its trust, as did Israel: will the Quraysh learn the lesson of Good and Evil? (44:30-59, and C. 217).

C.216 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(44:1-29)

blest is the night in which Allah's Message
Comes down, as a Mercy to men, to warn them
Against Evil. How fractious of men to ignore
Or suppress such warnings? Proud Pharaoh
And his chiefs did resist Allah's authority,
But their sins rebounded on themselves:
They were swallowed up by the sea; and their tilth,
their gardens, their noble fanes and buildings,
And all the advantages of which they boasted
Passed to other hands. Not a tear
Was shed over them in heaven or earth.
Thus ends the tale of power misused.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim.

C4688. These Abbreviated Letters are discussed in Introduction to Surah 40.

وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢)

2. By the Book that makes things clear --

C4689. The Quran is its own evidence. In the last Surah (43:3) stress was laid on the fact that everyone could understand it.

Here the stress is on the fact that it is a Message of Mercy from Allah in that it warns mankind against evil.

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ ...

3. We sent it down during a blessed night:

C4690. Usually taken to be a night in the month of Ramadhan, say the 23rd, 25th, or 27th night of that month. It is referred to as the Night of Power in 97:1-2.

See also 2:185.

But perhaps we need not fix it literally by the calendar. The night that a Message descends from Allah is indeed a blessed night like a day of rain for a parched land.

... إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ (٣)

for We (ever) wish to warn (against Evil).

فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ (٤)

4. In that (night) is made distinct every affair of wisdom,

C4691. Such an occasion is one on which divine Wisdom places before us, through Revelation, the solution of spiritual problems of the highest import to mankind.

أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِندِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ (٥)

5. By command, from Our presence.
For We (ever) send (revelations),

رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦)

6. As a Mercy from thy Lord:
for He hears and knows (all things);

C4692. It is because Allah is the friend of the friendless and the help of the helpless that He hears all sincere

prayers, and as His knowledge embraces all things, He grants to us whatever is best for us, not as we see it, but as He knows it in His perfect knowledge.

رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِن كُنتُم مُّوقِنِينَ (٧)

7. The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all between them,
if ye (but) have an assured faith.

C4693. Cf. 2:4.

They cannot fully realise what a tremendous thing it is that Allah is their own Lord and Cherisher (next verse), as He is the Lord and Cherisher of the whole Universe, until they firmly believe,-until their Faith amounts to a certainty, secure and unshakable.

لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٨)

8. There is no god but He:
it is He Who gives life and gives death --
the Lord and Cherisher to you and your earliest ancestors.

بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ يَلْعَبُونَ (٩)

9. Yet they play about in doubt.

C4694. The story is mainly about the Quraish. But there is a wider meaning behind it, applicable to men generally, and at all times.

As a body the Quraish, especially in the earlier stages of the preaching of Islam, before they started persecution, received the Message with more amusement than hatred. They played about with it, and expressed doubts about it, whereas the Preacher was most earnest about it, with all his heart and soul in it, as he loved his people and wished to save them from their wickedness and folly.

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ ...

10. Then watch thou for the Day,

C4695. What Day is this?

It obviously refers to great calamity, and from the wording it is to be a great calamity in the future, seen with the prophetic eye.

The word **yagsha** in verse 11 may be compared to **gashiya** in 88:1, which obviously refers to the final Day of Judgment.

But verse 15 below ("We shall remove the Penalty for a while") shows that it is not the final Judgment referred to here, but some calamity that was to happen soon afterwards, Perhaps it was a famine, about which see the next note.

... تَأْتِي السَّمَاء بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٠)

that the sky will bring forth a kind of smoke (or mist) plainly visible.

C4696. The **"smoke"** or **"mist"** is interpreted on good authority to refer to a severe famine in Makkah, in which men were so pinched with hunger that they saw mist before their eyes when they looked at the sky.

Ibn Kathir in his Tarikh mentions two famines in Makkah, one in the 8th year of the Mission, say the fourth year before the Hijrah, and another about the 8th year after the Hijrah. But as either or both of these famines lasted as many as seven years, the dates are to be taken very roughly. It is even possible that the two famines were continuous, of varying severity from year to year.

Bukhari mentions only the post-Hijrah famine, which was apparently so severe that men began to eat bones and carrion. Abu Sufyan (about 8 A.H.) approached the holy Prophet to intercede and pray for the removal of the famine, as the Pagans attributed it to the curse of the Prophet. Surah 23., which is also Makkan, but of later date than the present Surah, also refers to a famine:

see 23:75, and n. 2921.

As Surahs were not all revealed entire, but many came piecemeal, it is possible that particular verses in a given Surah may be of different dates from the Surah as a whole.

يَغْشَى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١١)

11. Enveloping the people: this will be a Penalty Grievous.

رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّا مُؤْمِنُونَ (١٢)

12. (They will say:)
"Our Lord! remove the Penalty from us for We do really believe!"

أَنَّى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرَى ...

13. How shall the Message be (effectual) for them,

C4697. The Quraish had before them a prophet whose purity of life was openly known to them; they themselves called him al-Amin (worthy of all trust); he preached in their own language in words of burning eloquence and transparent clearness; yet they turned away from him and called him a madman, or one whose Message was not inspired by Allah, but written by some hidden hand (see next note)!

How will the teaching of spiritual Truth make way among such unreasonable people?

... وَقَدْ جَاءهُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٣)

seeing that a Messenger explaining things clearly has (already) come to them --

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا مُعَلَّمٌ مَّجْنُونٌ (١٤)

14. Yet they turn away from him and say:
"Tutored (by others), a man possessed!"

C4698.

Tutored.- see 16:103, and n. 2143.

Possessed: see 15:6, and n. 1940.

... إِنَّا كَاشِفُو الْعَذَابِ قَلِيلًا

15. We shall indeed remove the Penalty for a while,

C4699. Allah gives every chance to all His creatures, however rebellious. He gives them a little trial, perhaps personal, perhaps economic, to see if that would bring

them to their bearings, and train their will in the right direction.

Some are thus reclaimed, and some do not learn. Perhaps, for the latter, he gives them a chance by removing the trial; some are reclaimed, and some still remain obdurate.

And so, in His wisdom, He allows His grace to work, again and again, until, at the last, Judgment must seize the last and irreclaimable remnant "with a mighty onslaught".

Such working of Allah's Providence is clearly visible in the story of the Quraish. It is a pity that the economic conditions of Makkah have not been studied in detail in any of the standard biographies of the Prophet. The so-called biographies by non-Muslims, e.g. , Muir's Life, do not even mention any Makkan famine or its reactions on the Quraish mind!

إِنَّكُمْ عَائِدُونَ (١٥)...

(but) truly ye will revert (to your ways).

يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرَى إِنَّا مُنتَقِمُونَ (١٦)

16. One day We shall seize you with a mighty onslaught:
We will indeed (then) exact Retribution!

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ ...

17. We did, before them, try the people of Pharaoh:

C4700. This reference is to the pride of Pharaoh and his Egyptians, and their fall, rather than to the story of Moses himself; just as in 44:30-33 the reference is to the blessings bestowed on Israel, contrasted with their pride, unbelief, and fall;

and in 44:37, to the ancient Himyar kingdom in Yemen, which similarly fell for its sins.

وَجَاءهُمْ رَسُولٌ كَرِيمٌ (١٧) ...

there came to them and messenger most honorable,

C4701. Most honourable: this epithet is specially applied to Moses here, as expressing the truth, in contrast to the Pharaoh's false characterization of him as "a contemptible wretch". (43:52).

أَنْ أَدُّوا إِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ ...

18. Saying: "Restore to me the servants of Allah:

C4702. The argument of Moses and his "authority manifest" will be found at 7:104-108, 120-126, 130-137.

Notice how fully he assumes the authority of his office here. He claims all **"servants of Allah"**, i.e., true worshippers, as under his protection, for his mission was both to the Egyptians and the Israelites; he asks that they should be restored to him; and he boldly denounces the Pharaoh's arrogance "as against Allah".

... إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٨)

I am to you an messenger worthy of all trust;

C4703. "Worthy of all trust": Amin, a title applied to prophets in Surah 26: e.g., see 26:107.

As the holy Prophet had historically earned that title among his own people, the reminiscences of the story of Moses apply to him in his relations with the arrogant Quraish.

وَأَنْ لَا تَعْلُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنِّي آتِيكُم بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٩)

19. "And be not arrogant as against Allah:

for I come to you with authority manifest.

وَإِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ أَن تَرْجُمُونِ (٢٠)

20. "For me, I have sought Safety with my Lord and your Lord, against your injuring me.

C4704. It is no use their plotting his death or his vilification; for his safety is in Allah. As he truly says, "Allah is not only my Lord, but your Lord also; your responsibility arises apart from my preaching, but I preach in order to remind you of it."

C4705. "Injuring me": literally "stoning me". "Stoning" may be here symbolical of any injury or vilification.

وَإِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا لِي فَاعْتَزِلُونِ (٢١)

21. "If ye believe me not, at least keep yourselves away from me."

C4706. If you do not believe me, at least go your ways: do not add to your sins by trying to suppress me and the Message of Truth which I bring: keep out of my way.

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ مُّجْرِمُونَ (٢٢)

22. (But they were aggressive):

then he cried to his Lord:

"These are indeed a people given to sin."

C4707. They would not even leave him alone to do his duty. So he cried to Allah, not indeed to destroy them, for a Prophet does not judge, but only Allah judges; he justified himself in prayer, that he had done his best, but they were obdurate in sin, and they were trying to oppress and injure the believers.

Then came the order to march. They were to march under the cover of night, because the enemy was sure to pursue. They were to march with all believers, presumably believing Egyptians (such as were not martyred) as well as Israelites, for some Egyptians had believed: 7:121.

فَأَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي لَيْلًا إِنَّكُم مُّتَّبَعُونَ (٢٣)

23. (The reply came):

"March forth with My servants by night: for ye are sure to be pursued.

وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا ...

24. "And leave the sea as a furrow (divided).

C4708. For the passage of Moses and his following, the sea had divided: they were to pass through the gap or furrow and leave it alone, to lure on the Egyptian host, on which the sea afterwards closed in, totally destroying them.

... إِنَّهُمْ جُندٌ مُّغْرَقُونَ (٢٤)

For they are a host (destined) to be drowned."

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِن جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٢٥)

25. How many were the gardens and springs they left behind.

C4709. There follows a word-picture of all the fine and enjoyable things which the ruling caste had monopolized. Now these proud monopolists were drowned in the sea, and the inheritance went to other hands.

وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ (٢٦)

26. And corn-fields and noble buildings.

وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَاكِهِينَ (٢٧)

27. And wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight!

... كَذَٰلِكَ

28. Thus (was their end)!

... وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ (٢٨)

And We made other people inherit (those things)!

... فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ

29. And neither heaven nor earth shed a tear over them:

C4710. They died, "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung". They were too inordinate to be given another chance. Pharaoh had claimed to be their supreme god; and they had followed him!

... وَمَا كَانُوا مُنظَرِينَ (٢٩)

nor were they given a respite (again).

C.217 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(44:30-59)

So with the Children of Israel;
Granted gifts and favours, they became
Arrogant and fell. Can the Quraysh
Escape the doom for sin? We created
The World for just ends. The Day
Will come when good and evil will be
Sorted out; each will meet
The fruits of its own deeds. Give good heed
To the Message revealed, and wait and watch.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ (٣٠)

30. We did deliver aforetime the Children of Israel from humiliating Punishment,

C4711. The Israelites were held in bondage prior to the Exodus. Their hard taskmaster placed every indignity on them, and by Pharaoh's decree their male children were to be killed, and their females were to be kept alive for the Egyptians.

مِن فِرْعَوْنَ...

31. Inflicted by Pharaoh,

... إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (٣١)

for he was arrogant (even) among inordinate transgressors.

وَلَقَدِ اخْتَرْنَاهُمْ عَلَى عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٢)

32. And We chose them aforetime above the nations, knowingly,

C4712. From degrading servitude, Israel was delivered, and taken, in spite of many rebellions and backslidings on the way, to "a land flowing with milk and honey",

where later they established the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. This was not merely fortuitous.

In Allah's decree it was to be a link in furthering His Plan. But their being chosen did not mean that they could do what they liked. In that sense there is no "chosen race-before Allah. But Allah gives every race and every individual a chance, and when the race or individual fails to live up to it, he or it must fall and give place to others.

وَآتَيْنَاهُم مِّنَ الْآيَاتِ مَا فِيهِ بَلَاء مُّبِينٌ (٣٣)

33. And granted them Signs in which there was a manifest trial.

C4713. Among the **"Signs"** given to Israel were their own Revelation under Moses, their prosperous land of Canaan, their flourishing Kingdom under David and Solomon, their prophets and teachers of Truth, and the advent of Jesus to reclaim the lost ones among them. All these were trials. When they failed in the trials, they were left to wander desolate and suffer.

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاء لَيَقُولُونَ (٣٤)

34. As to these (Quraish), they say forsooth:

C4714. The cases of the Egyptians and the Israelites having been cited as great nations which fell through inordinate vanity and wrong-doing, the case is now pressed home against the Quraish leaders in their arrogance to the holy Prophet himself.

They deny Revelation; they deny a future life, as the Sadducees did among the Jews before them; they persecute the prophet of Allah, and those who believe in him: and they mockingly demand that their ancestors should be brought back to life, if it is true that there is a future life.

They are reminded that better men than they lived in their own country of Arabia, men who had knowledge of Allah's revelation under the earliest Dispensation. See next note. They perished because of their unbelief and wrong-doing. What chance have they unless they turn and repent?

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنشَرِينَ (٣٥)

35. "There is nothing beyond our first death, and we shall not be raised again.

فَأْتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣٦)

36. "Then bring (back) our forefathers if what ye say is true!"

أَهُمْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ...

37. What! are they better than the people of Tubba and those who were before them?

C4715. Tubba' is understood to be a title or family name of Himyar kings in Yemen, of the tribe of Hamdan.

The Himyar were an ancient race. At one time they seem to have extended their hegemony over all Arabia and perhaps beyond, to the East African Coast.

Their earliest religion seems to have been Sabianism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. They seem at different times, later on, to have professed the Jewish and the Christian religion.

Among the Embassies sent by the holy Prophet in A.H. 9-10 was one to the Himyar of Yemen, which led to their coming into Islam. This was of course much later than the date of this Surah.

... أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ (٣٧)

We destroyed them because they were guilty of sin.

C4716. In prehistoric times the Himyar and Yemen seem to have played a large part in Arabia and even beyond: see last note. But when they were intoxicated with power, they fell into sin, and gradually they ceased to count, not only in Arabia but even in Yemen.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ (٣٨)

38. We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, merely in (idle) sport:

C4717. Cf. 21:16, and n. 2676.

All creation is for a wise and just purpose. But men usually do not realise or understand it, because they are steeped in their own ignorance, folly, or passions.

مَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩)

39. We created them not except for just ends:
but most of them do not understand.

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيقَاتُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٤٠)

40. Verily the Day of Sorting Out is the time appointed for all of them --

C4718. Day of Sorting Out, or the Day of Decision. Cf. 37:21, and n. 4047.

Ignorance, prejudice, passion, spite, and selfishness, seem sometimes to flourish in this probationary life. In any case they are mixed up with knowledge, justice, commonsense, love and regard for others. But the good and the evil will be sorted out and separated at the Day of Judgment. There is a time appointed for it. In Allah's good time all will come right.

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي مَوْلًى عَن مَّوْلًى شَيْئًا وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٤١)

41. The Day when no protector can avail his client in aught, and no help can they receive.

C4719. When that Day comes, the strictest justice will prevail. No man, however prominently he may have walked on the world's stage, can help another. He himself will need help, not the sort of log-rolling help which high and low render to each other in this life, but which in the conditions of reality will be of no avail. The only things which will help will be the Mercy of Allah.

إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ اللَّهُ...

42. Except such as receive Allah's Mercy:

C4720. Allah's Mercy will be the only thing of any efficacy, for He is both able to help ("Exalted in Might") and willing to forgive ("Most Merciful").

إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٤٢)...

for He is exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

Section 3

إِنَّ شَجَرَةَ الزَّقُّومِ (٤٣)

43. Verily the tree of Zaqqum

C4721. Now follows a word-picture of the horrors to which Evil must lead us. What human language and what figures of speech can adequately describe them?

C4722. The opposite of "delicious Fruits" is the terrible tree of **Zaqqam**, which is further described in 37:62-68, where see n. 4073.

Also see 17:60, n. 2250.

طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ (٤٤)

44. Will be the food of the Sinful --

كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ (٤٥)

45. Like molten brass; it will boil in their insides,

كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيمِ (٤٦)

46. Like the boiling of scalding water.

خُذُوهُ فَاعْتِلُوهُ إِلَى سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ (٤٧)

47. (A voice will cry:)

"Seize ye him and drag him into the midst of the Blazing Fire!

ثُمَّ صُبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ (٤٨)

48. "Then pour over his head the Penalty of Boiling Water;

ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ (٤٩)

49. "Taste thou (this)!

Truly wast thou Mighty, full of honor!

C4723. In this particular Surah the besetting sin we are considering is the arrogance born of place or power, wealth or honour, as understood in this world. The punishment of ignominy looks back to the kind of sin which is to be punished.

إِنَّ هَٰذَا مَا كُنتُم بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ (٥٠)

50. "Truly this is what ye used to doubt!"

C4724. When the Punishment becomes a realized fact, how foolish will those look who doubted whether there would be a Hereafter?

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ (٥١)

51. As to the Righteous (they will be) in a position of Security,

C4725. There will be no uncertainty, as on this earth; no danger of discontinuance: no possibility of their satisfaction being terminated.

فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٥٢)

52. Among Gardens and Springs;

يَلْبَسُونَ مِن سُندُسٍ ...

53. Dressed in fine silk,

C4726. Cf. 18:31, and n. 2373.

... وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ (٥٣)

and in rich brocade, they will face each other;

C4727. Everything will be open and in social companionship: for all the petty feelings of jealousy or exclusiveness will have passed away.

... كَذَٰلِكَ

54. Moreover,

... وَزَوَّجْنَاهُم

and We shall Join them to Companions...

C4728. The Maidens, like the scene, the dress, the outlook, and the fruit, will be beautiful. There will be life, but free from all earthly grossness. The women as well as the men of this life will attain to this indescribable bliss. (R).

... بِحُورٍ عِينٍ (٥٤)

... with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes.

C4729. Hur implies the following ideas:

- purity,
- beauty, especially of eyes, where the intense white of the eye-balls stands out against the intense black of the pupil, thus giving the appearance of lustre, and intense feeling, as opposed to dullness or want of expression; and
- truth and goodwill.

يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ (٥٥)

55. There can they call for every kind of **fruit** in peace and security;

C4730. The signification is explained in n. 4671 to 43:73.

... لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَى

56. Nor will they there taste Death, except the first Death;

C4731. First Death: the ordinary natural death from this life, which brought them to the Garden of Felicity: there will be no further death after that.

Cf. 37:59, and n. 4071.

... وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (٥٦)

and He will preserve them from the Penalty of the Blazing Fire

C4732. In Islam we are taught that salvation is not possible by our unaided efforts. Certainly, striving on our part is an indispensable condition: but it is the Mercy of Allah which comes to our help and keeps us from the Fire of final Punishment.

This is mentioned last as the foundation on which is built our eternal felicity and our positive spiritual joys. (R).

فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكَ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٥٧)

57. As a Bounty from thy Lord!
That will be the supreme achievement!

C4733. This is our idea of Salvation; the negative avoidance of all the consequences of evil, and the positive attainment of all-and more than all-that our hearts could possibly desire. For Allah's Bounty outstrips anything that our eyes have seen, or our ears have heard of, or our imagination can conceive.

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٥٨)

58. Verily, We have made this (Qur'án) easy, in thy tongue, in order that they may give heed.

C4734. Easy: not only to understand, being in the Arabic tongue; but mellifluous, whose rhythm carries off our spirits to a higher spiritual plane.

In another sense, it is difficult; for to get to its deepest meaning, we shall have to strive hard, as the contents of this Surah alone will show.

فَارْتَقِبْ إِنَّهُم مُّرْتَقِبُونَ (٥٩)

59. So wait thou and watch;
for they (too) are waiting.

The Absolute Reality

إِنَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Jathiyah

الجَاثِيَة

Introduction and Summary

This is the sixth of the *Ha Mim* series: for their general theme and chronology, see the Introduction to Surah 40.

Summary- The title Al Jathiyah (The Kneeling Down, or Bowing the knee), taken from verse 28, expresses the leading idea in the Surah. In this life, in spite of the Signs of Allah, and the evidences of His goodness all around, men go about in Unfaith, and mocking at Faith; but the End will bring them all to the3ir knees.

C.218 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The signs of Allah are everywhere:
His power, wisdom, and goodness are shown
Through all Creation and in Revelation.
How can man be so ungrateful
As to reject true Guidance, reaping thus
The fruits of Evil? But men of Faith
Have patience and forgive their weaker
Brethren, and trust in the final justice
Of Allah. From no sects, as was done
Aforetime, nor make you lusts your gods:
The future is sure, and in the hands
Of Allah, to Whom all will bend the knee,
When Truth will shine in all its glory.
So praise and glory to Allah, the lord
And Cherisher of all the worlds!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim.

C4735. See Introduction to Surah 40.

تَنزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢)

2. The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom.

C4736. This verse is the same as 40:2, except that **"wisdom"** is here substituted in the last line for **"knowledge"**.

This is appropriate, as in this Surah we are dealing with the folly of those who reject Allah and His Signs, while Surah 40. dealt with the individual soul's witness to Faith and Virtue.

إِنَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣)

3. Verily in the heavens and the earth, are Signs for those who believe.

C4737. Verses 3-5 deal with some of the points in the noble argument in 2:164, but again there are differences on account of the different context.

Note that here the argument is divided into three parts, one in each verse.

- In verse 3 we are dealing with big Signs external to ourselves, some of which are far beyond our personal experiences: for them we require Faith: they are Signs "for those who believe."

For the other two see the next two notes.

وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ...

4. And in the creation of yourselves

C4738.

- These Signs are in our own nature and in the animals we meet with every day; here we have certainty within human limits:

...وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِن دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (٤)

and the fact that animals are scattered (through the earth), are Signs for those of assured Faith.

these are **"for those of assured Faith"**.

وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ...

5. And in the alternation of Night and Day,

C4739.

- These are our daily experiences from external things, but they affect us and our lives intimately: here are questions of deductions **"for those that are wise."**

...وَمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِن رِّزْقٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

and the fact that Allah sends down Sustenance from the sky, and revives therewith the earth after its death,

C4740. "Sustenance" is almost equivalent here to "rain".

And "rain" itself, and its revival of a dead earth, refer symbolically to Revelation and its putting new life into a dead soul.

Similarly the alternation of Night and Day, and the change of the winds, besides being Signs as wonderful phenomena of Nature, refer to spiritual ignorance and knowledge, rest and activity, and the constant beneficent changes that are going on in the world, making for the spread of the blessing of Allah's Revelation.

...وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٥)

and the change of the winds, are Signs for those that are wise.

...تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ

6. Such are the Signs of Allah, which We rehearse to thee in truth:

C4741. If there are any to whom the Signs from Nature, from within their own heart and conscience, and from the voice of Revelation, are not enough to convince them, what possible kind of exposition will they accept?

...فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦)

then in what exposition will they believe after (rejecting) Allah and His Signs?

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ (٧)

7. Woe to each sinful Dealer in Falsehoods:

C4742. A soul so dead, as described in the last note, is indeed wretched. It will resort to falsehoods, in worship, in conduct, and in its attitude towards Allah. It will be obstinate, and pretend to be 'above such things'. It will hear the most beautiful Message but not profit by it. The loss or punishment is its own, and grievous it is!

...يَسْمَعُ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يُصِرُّ مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا

8. He hears the Signs of Allah rehearsed to him, yet is obstinate and lofty, as if he had not heard them:

...فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٨)

then announce to him a Penalty Grievous!

...وَإِذَا عَلِمَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا شَيْئًا اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا

9. And when he learns something of Our Signs, he takes them in jest:

...أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (٩)

for such there will be a humiliating Penalty.

C4743. Note that in each of the verses 8-11 the Penalty is characterized by a certain description, which accords with the crime.

- In verse 8, the man is arrogant about the Sips of Allah's love and care all around him, and his Penalty is "grievous".
- In verse 9, he ridicules Allah's Signs, and his Penalty is "humiliating": he makes himself a ridiculous fool,
- and next two are described in the two following notes.

... مِن وَرَائِهِمْ جَهَنَّمُ

10. In front of them is Hell:

... وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُم مَّا كَسَبُوا شَيْئًا وَلَا مَا اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاء...

and of no profit to them is anything they may have earned, nor any protectors they may have taken to themselves besides Allah:

...وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٠)

for them is a tremendous Penalty.

C4744.

- In verse 10 the sinner has piled up the good things of this life, and thinks he has got plenty of helpers and protectors, but all these things are of no use.

  On the contrary, his Penalty will be **"tremendous"**, to correspond with the great pains which he has taken to multiply the gods of his worship.

هَذَا هُدًى...

11. This is (true) Guidance:

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رِّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ (١١)

and for those who reject the Signs of their Lord, is a grievous Penalty of abomination.

C4745.

- In verse 11, he has flouted and rejected the specific guidance that came to him from the Word of Allah, or from the admonition of a prophet of Allah. His Penalty is a penalty of abomination: he earns unspeakable horror and abomination from all the Righteous, and is an unclean object in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Section 2

اللَّهُ الَّذِي سخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلْكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ...

12. It is Allah Who has subjected the sea to you, that ships may sail through it by His command, that ye may seek of His Bounty,

C4746. Cf. 16:14 and notes thereon, especially n. 2037.

The one encircling ocean of our globe is one of the most significant facts in our physical geography. Its salt water is an agent of global sanitation. The salubrious effects of sea-air, with its ozone, are well known to everyone who has recouped his health by its means. Thanks to ships, the sea unites rather than divides: communications are, and have always been, more active between sea-coast towns than further inland. They thus further human intercourse, and help us to seek the **"Bounty of Allah"**, not only in a commercial but in an intellectual and spiritual sense.

...وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢)

and that ye may be grateful.

All this is through "Allah's command" i.e., by His beneficent ordering of the universe, and we should be grateful.

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ...

13. And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth:

The sea was only one example of Allah's cherishing care in making all things in nature available for the use of man, through the genius and faculties which He has given to man. Man should never forget that it is all **"as from Him"**, i.e., from Allah, For is not man Allah's vicegerent on earth (2:30)

...إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (١٣)

behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect.

قُل لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ لا يَرْجُون أَيَّامَ اللَّهِ...

14. Tell those who believe, to forgive those who do not look forward to the Days of Allah:

C4748. Cf. 7:54, n. 1031.

The Days of Allah I interpreter to mean not periods of twenty-four hours, but the stages through which Allah's Purpose works in us on bringing home to us a sense of sin and a sense of Allah's Mercy. We must be patient with those who have not yet acquired that sense.

"Days of Allah" may also mean the Days of the Kingdom of Allah, when evil will be destroyed and Allah's authority will reign unquestioned.

...لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا بِما كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٤)

it is for Him to **recompense** (for good or ill) each **People** according to what they have earned.

C4749. Allah will give due recompense for good or evil according to His own full Knowledge and righteous Plan, and in His own good time. (R).

C4750. "People" here may be taken to be a group of common characteristics, e.g., the righteous in contrast with the unrighteous, the oppressed in contrast with the oppressors, and so on.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ...

15. If anyone does a righteous deed, it enures to the benefit of his own soul;

if he does evil, it works against (His own soul).

C4751. Ordinarily good and evil come to their own even in this world; but in any case there is the final Judgment before Allah.

... ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (١٥)

In the end will ye (all) be brought back to your Lord.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ...

16. We did aforetime grant to the **Children** of Israel the Book, the Power of Command, and Prophethood;

C4752. The argument here is similar to that in 44:32-33 but; it is more particularized here.

Israel had the Revelation given through Moses, the power of judgment and command through the Kingdom of David and Solomon, and numerous prophetic warnings through such men as Isaiah and Jeremiah.

...وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦)

We gave them, for Sustenance, things good and pure; and We favored them above the nations.

C4753. "Sustenance". The Mosaic Law laid down rules of diet, excluding things unclean, and it laid down rules for a pure and honourable life. In this way Israel became the standard-bearer of Allah's law, thus **"favoured above the nations"**.

وَآتَيْنَاهُم بَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ...

17. And We granted them clear Signs in affairs (of Religion):

it was **only** after knowledge had been granted to them that they fell into schisms, through **insolent** envy among themselves.

C4754. Cf. 10:93.

The Jews were the more to blame that they fell from Grace after all the divine favours which they had enjoyed. Their schisms and differences arose from mutual envy, which was rebellious insolence against Allah.

As the next verse shows, some of them (not all) rejected the mission of the holy Prophet, also through envy that a Prophet had come among the Arabians.

C4755. Cf. 2:90, and that whole passage, with its notes.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٧)

Verily thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgement as to those matters in which they set up differences.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَى شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا ...

18. Then We put thee on the (right) Way of Religion: so follow thou that (Way),

C4756. Shariah is best translated the "right Way of Religion", which is wider than the mere formal rites and legal provisions, which mostly came in the Madinah period, long after this Makkan verse had been revealed.

... وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاء الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٨)

and follow not the desires of those who know not.

إِنَّهُمْ لَن يُغْنُوا عَنكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا...

19. They will be of no use to thee in the sight of Allah:

C4757. That is, in the service of Allah.

Ignorant and contentious men are of no use or service to any Cause. The more you seek their help, the more do

their ignorance and their contentiousness increase their own importance in their own eyes.

Evil protects (or thinks it protects) evil: it has really no power of protection at all, for itself or for others. The righteous seek the protection of Allah, Who can and will protect them.

...وإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاء بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٩)

it is only Wrongdoers (that stand as) protectors, one to another: but Allah is the Protector of the Righteous.

هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (٢٠)

20. These are clear evidences to men, and a Guidance and Mercy to those of assured Faith.

C4758. The **evidences** of Allah's Signs should be clear to all men: to men of Faith, who accept Allah's Grace, they are a Guide and a Mercy.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن نَّجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ...

21. What!

do those who seek after evil ways think that We shall hold them equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds,

C4759. Three meanings can be deduced.

- The evil ones are not in Allah's sight like the righteous ones; neither in life nor in death are they equal; in life the righteous are guided by Allah and receive His Grace, and after death His Mercy, while the others reject His Grace, and after death receive condemnation.

- Neither are the two the same in this life and in the after-life; if the wicked flourish here, they will be condemned in the Hereafter; if the good are in suffering or sorrow here, they will receive comfort and consolation in the Hereafter.

- The real life of the righteous is not like the nominal life of the wicked, which is really death; nor is the physical death of the righteous, which will bring them into eternal life, like the terrible death of the wicked which will bring them to eternal misery.

سَوَاء مَّحْيَاهُم وَمَمَاتُهُمْ سَاء مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (٢١)...

that equal will be their Life and their death?

Ill is the judgment that they make.

Section 3

وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ...

22. Allah created the **heavens** and the earth for just ends,

C4760. Cf. 44:38-39, and 44:38-39.

The government of the world is so ordered that each soul gets every chance for its full development, and it reaps the fruit of all its activities. If it breaks away from Allah's Grace, it suffers, but no injustice is done to anyone: on the contrary Allah's Bounty is always beyond man's deserts.

... وَلِتُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ...

and in order that each soul may find the recompense of what it has earned,

وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٢٢)...

and none of them be wronged.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ ...

23. Then seest thou **such** a one as takes as his god his own vain desire?

C4761. If a man follows, not the laws of Allah, which are also the laws of his own pure nature as made by Allah, but the desires of his own distorted self, as shaped by the rebellion of his will, the inevitable consequence will be the withdrawal of Allah's grace and guidance. All his faculties will then be debased, and there will be nothing

to guide him, unless he turns in repentance again to Allah.

... وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ...

Allah has, knowing (him as such), left him astray,

...وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ...

and **sealed** His hearing and his heart (and understanding), and put a cover on his sight.

C4762. Cf. 2:7 and notes.

...غِشَاوَةً فَمَن يَهْدِيهِ مِن بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ....

Who, then, will guide him after Allah (has withdrawn Guidance)?

.. أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٣)

Will ye not then receive admonition?

... وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ

24. And they say:

"What is there but our life in this world?

... وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ...

We shall die and we live, and nothing but Time can destroy us."

C4763. Cf. 23:37, and n. 2896.

The additional touch here, **"And nothing but Time can destroy us"**, suggests the materialist philosophy that Matter and Time are eternal backwards and forwards; and possibly also that though each individual perishes, the race lasts till Time destroys it. This is not knowledge but conjecture. Why not accept light from Him Who knows all.

...وَمَا لَهُم بِذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ (٢٤)

But of that they have no knowledge: they merely conjecture:

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا...

25. And when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, their argument is nothing but this: they say,

...ائْتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٥)

"Bring (back) our forefathers, if what ye say is true!"

C4764. Cf. 44:36.

It is no argument to say, "If there is a future life, bring back our forefathers and let us see them here and now!"

It is not for a man to raise the dead when and where he pleases. It is for Allah to command. And His promise is about the general Resurrection for the Day of Judgment. In His hands are the keys of life and death.

...قُلِ اللَّهُ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ

26. Say:

"It is Allah Who gives you life, then gives you death;

then He will gather you together for the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt":

...وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦)

but most men do not understand.

Section 4

... وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ

27. To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and the Day that the Hour of Judgment is established --

... يَوْمَئِذٍ يَخْسَرُ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (٢٧)

that Day will the dealers in Falsehood perish!

C4765. These vain wranglers about the future life and deniers of the Truth may have a run in this fleeting world; but the moment the world of Reality is established, they will see what they now deny.

The facts will destroy their fancies, and they themselves will find themselves humiliated and lost, for having deliberately ignored Allah's Signs and acted on opposition to His holy Will.

وَتَرَى كُلَّ أُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً ...

28. And thou wilt see every sect bowing the knee:

C4766. Bowing the knee: the key-phrase of the Surah, and its title. Cf. 19:72.

Whatever the arrogance of the wicked may be in this life, whatever exclusive sects and divisions they may form, in this life, the time will come when they will humbly submit and bow the knee to the Truth. Before Allah, when their Record is produced, they must necessarily be dumb.

... كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَى إِلَى كِتَابِهَا...

every sect will be called to its Record:

...الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٨)

"This Day shall ye be recompensed for all that ye did!

هَذَا كِتَابُنَا يَنطِقُ عَلَيْكُم بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنسِخُ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٩)

29. "This Our Record speaks about you with truth:
for We were wont to put on record all that ye did."

C4767. Cf. 43:80.

Nothing misses the Recording Angel, and whatever is said in the Record is true.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ...

30. Then, as to those who believed and did righteous deeds, their Lord will admit them to His Mercy:

...ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ (٣٠)

that will be the Achievement for all to see.

C4768. The attainment and satisfaction of all hopes and desires; the reaching of the final goal of Bliss.

Cf. 44:57, and n. 4733.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنتُمْ

قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣١)

31. But as to those who reject Allah, (to them will be said):

"Were not Our Signs rehearsed to you?

But ye were arrogant, and were a people given to sin!

وَإِذَا قِيلَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا ...

32. "And when it was said that the promise of Allah was true, and that the Hour -- there was no doubt about its (coming),

... قُلْتُم مَّا نَدْرِي مَا السَّاعَةُ...

ye used to say, We know not what is the Hour:

C4769. There is arrogance as well as untruth in this pretence. The coming of Judgment has been proclaimed times out of number by every prophet of Allah. They cannot dismiss it as a mere idea or superstition. Their object is merely an ostentatious and lofty rejection of Faith.

...إِن نَّظُنُّ إِلَّا ظَنًّا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُسْتَيْقِنِينَ (٣٢)

we only think it is an idea, and we have no firm assurance.'"

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُون (٣٣)

33. Then will appear to them the evil (fruits) of what they did, and they will be completely encircled by that which they used to mock at!

C4770. Cf. 11:8.

Their mockery will be turned against themselves, for they will be hemmed in by the very Realities which they had ignored or doubted or laughed at.

وَقِيلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنسَاكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا ...

34. It will also be said:

"This Day We will forget you as ye forgot the meeting of this Day of yours!

C4771. Cf. 7:51 and n. 1029.

"Forget" is of course metaphorical for "deliberately to ignore".

... وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ...

And your abode is the Fire,

...وَمَا لَكُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ (٣٤)

and no helpers have ye!

ذَٰلِكُم بِأَنَّكُمُ اتَّخَذْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا...

35. "This, because ye used to take the Signs of Allah in jest, and the life of the world deceived you."

C4772. It is implied that 'you deliberately allowed yourselves to be deceived by the vanities of this world', or 'that you put yourselves into a position where you were deceived, for you were expressly warned against Evil.'

...فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُونَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ (٣٥)

(From) the Day, therefore, they shall not be taken out thence, nor shall they be received into Grace.

... فَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ

36. Then Praise be to Allah,

C4773. The argument having been completed about the fruits of this life being reaped in the *Maad*, or the Hereafter, when perfect balance will be restored and perfect Justice will reign supreme,

the Surah closes with praise and glory to Allah, Who is not only Omnipotent but is full of Wisdom, and cherishes and cares for all His creation. We began with the remembrance of His Revelation and Mercy, and we close with the celebration of Ms goodness, power, and wisdom.

Note how the argument is rounded off by the reminiscence of the last clause of the second verse of this Surah.

... رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَرَبِّ الْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٦)

Lord of the heavens and Lord of the earth,

Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds!

... وَلَهُ الْكِبْرِيَاء فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

37. To Him be Glory throughout the heavens and the earth:

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣٧)

and He is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom!



وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا

And We have enjoined on man Kindness to his parents:

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ahqaf

الْأَحْقَاف

Introduction and Summary

This is the seventh and last Surah of the ***Ha Mim*** series. For the general theme and chronological place of these Surahs see the Introduction to Surah 40.

The *Ahqaf* (mentioned in verse 21) are the long and winding crooked tracts of sandhills, characteristic of the country of the 'Ad people, adjoining Hadramawt and Yemen; see 7:65, n. 1040. These people had, at that time, probably a fertile irrigated country, but their sins brought on the calamity mentioned in 46:24-25. The lesson of this Surah is that if the Truth is challenged, the challenge will be duly answered, and Truth vindicated.

Summary- All Creation has a purpose behind it: Truth and Revelation will be vindicated, and those who question it will be undone by the very means by which they set such sore: the righteous should wait in patience and constancy (46:1-35, and C. 219).

C.221 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Creation is for just ends, and Falsehood
Is but straying from the Path:
Say what people may
Truth carries its own vindication:
Follow it firmly. Let age think of youth,
And youth not turn rebellious. There are fine
Gradation in the kingdom of Allah; then strive
For the best. Let not pride and arrogance
Undo you: the humble are often the best
Recipients of Truth. All will come right
In good time: so persevere with patient firmness
Of purpose. Justice that seems to tarry
Comes really on swiftest foot but sure.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim.

C4774. See Introduction to Surah 40.

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢)

2. The **revelation** of the Book is from Allah the Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

C4775. This verse is the same as the second verse of the last Surah, but the theme is worked out differently in the two Surah.

In Surah 45 was shown how deniers of Revelation will at last be humbled until they can no longer deny its truth and power. In this Surah is shown how Truth and Revelation will be vindicated by patience and constancy (46:35).

مَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

3. We created not the heavens and the earth and all between them but for just ends, and for a term appointed:

C4776. Cf. 45:22.

Many things may appear to us in the present world as strange and inexplicable. But everything made by Allah has a just purpose which must be fulfilled.

Nothing in this world is permanent: everything is for an appointed term. The Word of Allah alone abides. All else will pass away after it has fulfilled its purpose. But Unbelievers refuse to face the danger of which they are warned.

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَمَّا أُنذِرُوا مُعْرِضُونَ (٣)

but those who reject Faith turn away from that whereof they are warned.

... قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ

4. Say:

"Do ye see what it is ye invoke besides Allah?

C4777. Some people may rush thoughtlessly into false worship, because it is the fashion or an ancestral custom, etc. They are asked to pause and see for themselves.

Have the false gods or falsehood created anything? (They destroy much).

Or have they any share or lot in the things we associate with the heavens,-spiritual well-being, etc.?

... أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ...

Show me what it is they have created on earth,

...أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ...

or have they a share in the heavens?

...ائْتُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ هَذَا ...

Bring me a Book (revealed) before this,

C4778. 'Or is there any warrant for you from any earlier revelation, assuming that you do not believe in this Revelation?

Or can you point to the least scrap or remnant of real knowledge on which you can base what We condemn as your false life?'

No, you cannot.

... أَوْ أَثَارَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤)

or any remnant of knowledge (ye may have), if ye are telling the truth!"

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّن يَدْعُو مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَن لَّا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ...

5. And who is more astray than one who invokes, besides Allah, such as will not answer him to the Day of Judgement,

C4779. As there is no argument at all in favour of your sham worship, what sense is there in it?

Either your false gods are senseless stocks and stones which will never answer you to the end of Time, being themselves devoid of understanding, or they are real objects which will disown you at the last.

If you worshipped Self, your own misused faculties will witness against you at the last (41:20-23).

If you worshipped good men or prophets, like Jesus, they will disown you (5:116-117). Similarly, if you worshipped angels, they will disown you (34:40-41).

...وَهُمْ عَن دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ (٥)

and who (in fact) are unconscious of their call (to them)?

وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَاء وَكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ (٦)

6. And when mankind are gathered together (at the Resurrection), they will be hostile to them and reject their worship (altogether)!

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ ...

7. When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, the Unbelievers say, of the Truth when it comes to them:

C4780. When the truth is actually brought to their doors, they call it sorcery!

Cf. 37:12-15, and n. 4042.

... هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧)

"This is evident sorcery!"

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ...

8. Or do they say, "He has forged it"?

...قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا...

"Had I forged it, then can ye obtain no single (blessing) for me from Allah.

C4781. 'If I forged a message from myself as one purporting to come from Allah, you would not be able to see me enjoy any of the blessings from Allah which I enjoy: you would not see me calm and relying on Allah, nor would you see me bear the reputation of being a trustworthy man. A liar comes to an evil end.

But what about those who talk so glibly and freely about things which they knows not? Allah knows all and He is my witness!

But even against your false accusation, I pray for His forgiveness nd mercy to you, for He is oft-Forgiving, Most merciful!

...هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ كَفَى بِهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ...

He knows best of that whereof ye talk (so glibly)!

Enough is He for a witness between me and you!

...وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٨)

And He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

قُلْ مَا كُنتُ بِدْعًا مِّنْ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ...

9. Say:

"I am no bringer of new-fangled doctrine among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you.

C4782. 'What is there to forge? All prophets have taught the Unity of Allah and our duty to mankind. I bring no new fangled doctrine, but eternal truths that have been known to good men through the ages. It is to reclaim you that I have come, I do not know what will be your fate for all this callousness, nor what you will do to me. But this I know, that I am preaching truth and righteousness as inspired by Allah. My duty is only to proclaim aloud and clearly the Message entrusted to me by Allah. The rest I leave to Allah.'

...إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَى إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٩)

I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration: I am but a Warner open and clear."

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُم بِهِ ...

10. Say:

"See ye? If (this teaching) be from Allah, and ye reject it,

C4783. Another side of the argument is now presented.

'You pagan Arabs! You are puffed up with pride, though you are an ignorant nation. Among Israel there are men who understand the previous scriptures, and who find in the Quran and its Preacher a true confirmation of the previous scriptures.

They accept Islam as a fulfilment of the revelation of Moses himself! (See Deut. 18:18-19).

And yet you hold back, though the Quran has come in your own language, in order to help you to understand. How unjust and how shameful!

In that case, with what face can you seek guidance from Allah?'

... وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّن بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى مِثْلِهِ فَآمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ...

and a witness from among the Children of Israel testifies to its **similarity** (with earlier scriptures), and has believed while ye are arrogant,

C4784. There were learned Jews (and Christians) who saw in the holy Prophet the Messenger of Allah foreshadowed in previous Revelations, and accepted Islam.

As this is a Makkan Surah we need not construe this as a reference to Abdullah ibn Salam, whose conversion was in Madinah only two years before the Prophet's death, unless we accept this particular verse to be so late in date. The sincere Jews were in a position to understand how this Revelation fitted in with all they had learnt about Revelation.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٠)

(how unjust ye are!) truly, Allah guides not a people unjust."

Section 2

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ...

11. The Unbelievers say of those who believe:

"If (this Message) were a good thing, (such men) would not have gone to it first, before us!"

C4785. A great many of the early Muslims were in humble positions, and were despised by the Quraish leaders. 'If such men could see any good in Islam, they said, 'there could be no good in it: if there had been any good in it, we should have been the first to see it!'

The spiritually blind have such a good conceit of themselves!

...وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ (١١)

and seeing that they guide not themselves thereby, they will say,

"This is an (old), old falsehood!"

As they reject it, and as the Revelation is proved to have historic foundations, they can only call it "an old, old falsehood"!

وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً...

12. And before this, was the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy;

C4786. The last revealed Book which was a Code of Life (Shariah) was the Book of Moses; for that of Jesus was not such a Code, but merely moral precepts to sweep away the corruptions that had crept in. The Quran has the same attitude to it as the teaching of Jesus had to the Law. Jesus said (Matt. 5:17): "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

But the corruptions took new forms in Christian Churches: an entirely new Shariah became necessary, and this was provided in Islam.

...وَهَٰذَا كِتَابٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا ...

and this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue;

... لِّيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٢)

to admonish the unjust, and as Glad Tidings to those who do right.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا ...

13. Verily those who say,

"Our Lord is Allah," and remain firm (on that Path) --

C4787. To say, **"Our Lord is Allah"** is to acknowledge that we owe no service to any creature, and shall render none: Allah shall have our exclusive devotion.

"To remain firm on that Path" is shown by our conduct.- we prove that we love Allah and all His creatures, and will unflinchingly do our duty in all circumstances.

... فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (١٣)

on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

C4788. Cf. 2:38.

The phrase occurs in numerous other places, with a new application on each occasion.

Here, if our claim is true that 'our Lord is Allah', what fear can possibly come on us, or what calamity can there be to cause us grief? For our Lord is our Cherisher, Defender, and Helper, our Hope and our Comfort, which can never fail.

أُوْلَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاء بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤)

14. Such shall be Companions of the Garden, dwelling Therein (for aye):

a recompense for their (good) deeds.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا ...

15. We have enjoined on **man** Kindness to his parents:

C4789. Cf. 29:8 and 31:14.

... حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا...

in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth.

...وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا...

The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.

C4790. In 31:14 the time of weaning was stated to be at the age of two years, i.e., 24 months. See also 2:233.

That leaves six months as the minimum period of human gestation after which the child is known to be viable.

This is in accordance with the latest ascertained scientific facts. The average period is 280 days, or ten times the inter-menstrual period, and of course the average period of weaning is much less than 24 months.

The maximum period of breast-feeding (2 years) is again in accordance with the time that the first dentition is ordinarily completed in a human child.

The lower milk incisors in the centre come out between the 6th and 9th months; then come out the milk teeth at intervals, until the canines appear. The second molars come out at about 24 months, and with them the child has a complete apparatus of milk teeth. Nature now expects him to chew and masticate and be independent of his mother's milk completely. On the other hand it hurts the mother to feed from the breast after the child has a complete set of milk teeth.

The permanent teeth begin at the sixth year, and the second molars come at 12 years. The third molars are the wisdom teeth, which may appear at 18 to 20 years, or not at all.

...حَتَّى إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ...

At length, when he reaches the age of full **strength** and attains forty years, he says,

C4791. The age of full strength **(ashudd)** is held to be between 18 and 30 To 32. Between 30 and 40 the man is in his best manhood. After that he begins to look to his growing issue, and rightly commends the new generation to Allah. Perhaps his spiritual faculties also gain the upper hand after 40.

...رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ...

"O my Lord! grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favor which Thou hast bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents,

...وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي...

and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve;

and be gracious to me in my issue.

...إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٥)

Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam."

...أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا...

16. Such are they from whom We shall accept the best of their deeds

C4792. Cf. 29:7 and n. 3429.

...وَنَتَجاوَزُ عَن سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ...

and pass by their ill deeds:

(they shall be) among the Companions of the Garden:

...وَعْدَ الصِّدْقِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ (١٦)

a promise of truth, which was made to them (in this life).

... وَالَّذِي قَالَ لِوَالِدَيْهِ

17. But (there is one) who says to his parents,

C4793. A godly man often has an ungodly son, who flouts all that the father held sacred, and looks upon his father himself as old-fashioned and unworthy of respect or regard.

The contrast in an individual family may be matched by the contrast in the passing and the rising generations of mankind. All this happens as a passing phase in the nominal evolution of mankind, and there is nothing in this to be despondent about.

What we have to do is for the mature generations to bring up their successors in godly ways, and for the younger generations to realise that age and experience count for something, especially in the understanding of spiritual matters and other matters of the highest moment to man.

... أُفٍّ لَّكُمَا أَتَعِدَانِنِي أَنْ أُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ الْقُرُونُ مِن قَبْلِي...

"Fie on you!

Do ye hold out the promise to me that I shall be raised up, even though generations have passed before me (without rising again)?"

...وَهُمَا يَسْتَغِيثَانِ اللَّهَ وَيْلَكَ آمِنْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

And they two seek Allah's aid, (and rebuke the son):

"Woe to thee! have Faith! For the promise of Allah is true."

...فَيَقُولُ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٧)

But he says, "This is nothing but tales of the ancients!"

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمَمٍ...

18. Such are they against **whom** is proved the Sentence among

C4794. Cf. 41:25 and n. 4494,

Each individual, each generation, and each people is responsible for its own good deeds or misdeeds. The law of actions and their fruits applies: you cannot blame one for another. The only remedy lies in seeking for Allah's Grace and Mercy, not only for ourselves but for others in brotherly or fatherly love.

This verse is in balanced contrast to verse 16 above,

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ (١٨)

the previous generations of Jinns and men, that have passed away; for they will be (utterly) lost.

وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجَاتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا وَلِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (١٩)

19. And to **all** are (assigned) degrees according to the deeds which they (have done), and in order that (Allah) may recompense their deeds, and no injustice be done to them.

C4795. There is fine grading in the Hereafter. Every deed, good or bad, is judged and weighed to the minutest degree, with its motives, intentions, results, and relevant circumstances.

It is not a mere rough classification. The fruits of evil will be exactly according to the degree of evil. But, as stated in other passages (e.g., 28:84), the reward of good deeds will be far beyond their merits, on account of the Mercy and unbounded Bounty of Allah.

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ...

20. And on the Day that the Unbelievers will be placed before the Fire,

...أَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَاتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهَا ...

(it will be said to them): "Ye received your good things in the life of the world, and ye took your pleasure out of them:

C4796. "Received your good things" implies (in Arabic) grabbing at them, being greedy of them, seeking them as fleeting pleasures rather than the more serious things of life, sacrificing the spiritual for the material.

... فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ...

but today shall ye be **recompensed** with a Penalty of humiliation:

C4797. They will be told: 'You took your choice, and you must pay the price, You did wrong in a rebellious spirit, and prided yourselves on your wrong-doing, not occasionally, but of set purpose and constantly. Now you will be humbled in the dust, as a fitting punishment.'

... بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنتُمْ تَفْسُقُونَ (٢٠)

for that ye were arrogant on earth without just cause, and that ye (ever) transgressed."

Section 3

وَاذْكُرْ أَخَا عَادٍ ...

21. Mention (Hud) one of 'Ad's (own) brethren:

C4798. Cf. 7:65. and n. 1040.

The point is that the Warner who was raised among the 'Ad people-as among other peoples-was not a stranger, but one of their own brethren, even as the holy Prophet began his preaching with a call to his own brethren the Quraysh.

... إِذْ أَنذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ...

behold, he warned his people about the winding Sand-tracts:

C4799. Winding Sand-tracts: Ahqaf: see Introduction to this Surah.

The very things, which, under irrigation and with Allah's Grace, gave them prosperity and power, were to be their undoing when they broke Allah's Law and defied His Grace.

See verses 24-26 below.

...وَقَدْ خَلَتْ النُّذُرُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ...

but there have been Warners before him and after him:

"Worship ye none other than Allah:

...إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٢١)

truly I fear for you the Penalty of a Mighty Day."

...قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِتَأْفِكَنَا عَنْ آلِهَتِنَا

22. They said:

"Hast thou **come** in order to turn us aside from Our gods?

C4800. They were too much wedded to their evil ways-to the false gods that they worshipped-to appreciate the sincere advice of the prophet of Allah. They defied him and defied Allah Who had sent him. Mockingly they challenged him to bring on the threatened punishment! For they did not believe a word of what he said.

...فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٢٢)

Then bring upon us the (calamity) with which thou dost threaten us, if thou art telling the truth!"

...قَالَ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِندَ اللَّهِ

23. He said:

"The **Knowledge** (of when it will come) is only with Allah:

C4801. The coming of the Punishment for evil was (and is always) certain. At what particular time it would come he could not tell. It is not for the prophet, but for Allah, to bring on the Penalty. But he saw that it was useless to appeal to them on account of the ignorance in which they were content to dwell.

...وَأُبَلِّغُكُم مَّا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ (٢٣)

I proclaim to you the mission on which I have been sent: but I see that ye are a people in ignorance!"...

... فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُّسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيَتِهِمْ

24. Then, when they saw the (Penalty in the shape of) a cloud traversing the sky, coming to meet their valleys,

C4802. The Punishment came suddenly, and when they least expected it. They wanted rain, and they saw a cloud and rejoiced. Behold, it was coming towards their own tracts, winding through the hills. Their irrigation channels would be full, their fields would be green, and their season would be fruitful.

But no!

What is this?

It is a tremendous hurricane, carrying destruction on its wings! A violent blast, with dust and sand! Its fury destroys everything in its wake! Lives lost! Fields covered with sand-hills!

The morning dawns on a scene of desolation! Where were the men who boasted and defied their Lord! There are only the ruins of their houses to witness to the past!

... قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا...

they said,

"This cloud will give us rain!"

...بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُم بِهِ رِيحٌ فِيهَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢٤)

"Nay,

it is the (calamity) ye were asking to be hastened! --

a wind wherein is a Grievous Penalty!

... تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا

25. "Everything will it destroy by the command of its Lord!"

... فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَى إِلَّا مَسَاكِنُهُمْ...

Then by the morning **they** -- nothing was to be seen but (the ruins of) their houses!

C4803. Here is the figure of speech known in rhetoric as aposiopesis, to heighten the effect of the suddenness and completeness of the calamity.

In the Arabic text, the verb **asbahu**, in the third person plural, leads us to expect that we shall be told what they were doing in the morning. But no! They had been wiped

out, and any small remnant had fled (see n. 1040 to 7:65). Nothing was to be seen but the ruins of their houses.

...كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٢٥)

Thus do We recompense those given to sin!

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِيمَا إِن مَّكَّنَّاكُمْ فِيهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَأَبْصَارًا وَأَفْئِدَةً...

26. And We had firmly established them in a (prosperity and) power which We have not given to you (ye Quraish!) and We had endowed them **with (faculties of) hearing, seeing, heart and intellect:**

C4804. The 'Ad and their successors the Thamud were more richly endowed with the faculties of the arts, sciences, and culture than ever were the Quraish before Islam.

"Hearing and seeing" refer to the experimental faculties;

the word **"heart"** in Arabic includes intellect, or the rational faculties, as well as the instruments of feeling and emotion, the aesthetic faculties.

The Second 'Ad, or Thamud, have left interesting traces of their architecture in the country round the Hijr: see n. 1043 to 7:73, and notes 2002-3 to 15:80-82.

...فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَا أَفْئِدَتُهُم مِّن شَيْءٍ...

but of no profit to them were their (faculties of) hearing, sight, and heart and intellect,

...إِذْ كَانُوا يَجْحَدُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ...

when they went on rejecting the **Signs** of Allah;

C4805. The highest talents and faculties of this world are useless in the next world if we reject the laws of Allah and thus become outlaws there.

... وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُون (٢٦)

and they were (completely) **encircled** by that which they used to mock at!

C4806. See n. 4770 to 45:33.

They used to mock at Allah's Signs, but those were the very things which hemmed them in, and showed that they had more power and effectiveness than anything else.

Section 4

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْقُرَى ...

27. We destroyed aforetime populations round about you;

C4807. In Arabian history and tradition alone, to say nothing of Allah's Signs elsewhere, sin inevitably suffered its Punishment, and in various ways. Would not the later people take warning?

... وَصَرَّفْنَا الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٢٧)

and We have shown the Signs in various ways, that they may turn (to Us).

فَلَوْلَا نَصَرَهُمُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ قُرْبَانًا آلِهَةً...

28. Why then was no help forthcoming to them from those whom they worshipped as gods, besides Allah, as a means of access (to Allah)?

...بَلْ ضَلُّوا عَنْهُمْ...

Nay, they left them in the lurch:

...وَذَٰلِكَ إِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (٢٨)

but that was their Falsehood and their invention.

C4808. The false things that they worshipped were figments of their imagination. If they had had any existence in fact, it was not of the kind they imagined.

وَإِذْ صَرَفْنَا إِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقُرْآنَ...

29. Behold, We turned towards thee a company of Jinns (quietly) listening to the Qur'án:

C4809. A company of Jinns. **Nafar** (company) may mean a group of from three to ten persons.

For Jinns, see n. 929 to 6:100.

They listened to the reading of the Quran with great respect.

The next verse shows that they had heard of the Jewish religion, but they were impressed with the Message of Islam, and they seem to have gone back to their people to share the Good News with them. (R).

...فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوهُ قَالُوا أَنصِتُوا فَلَمَّا قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا إِلَى قَوْمِهِم مُّنذِرِينَ (٢٩)

when they stood in the presence thereof, they said,

"Listen in silence!"

When the (reading) was finished, they returned to their people, to warn (them of their sins).

قَالُوا يَا قَوْمَنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتَابًا أُنزِلَ مِن بَعْدِ مُوسَى...

30. They said,

"O our people! We have heard a Book revealed after Moses,

...مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ وَإِلَى طَرِيقٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٣٠)

confirming what came before it:

it guides (men) to the Truth and to a Straight Path.

يَا قَوْمَنَا أَجِيبُوا دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ وَآمِنُوا بِهِ ...

31. "O our people,

hearken to the one who **invites** (you) to Allah, and believe in him:

C4810. The one who invites all to Allah is the holy Prophet. He invites us to Allah: if we believe in Allah and His Prophet, Allah will forgive us our sins on our repentance and amendment of our lives, and save us the Penalty of the future life.

... يَغْفِرْ لَكُم مِّن ذُنُوبِكُمْ...

He will forgive you your faults,

...وَيُجِرْكُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٣١)

and deliver you from a Penalty Grievous.

وَمَن لَّا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللَّهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ...

32. "If any does not hearken to the one who invites (Us) to Allah, he **cannot** frustrate (Allah's Plan) on earth,

C4811. If a person refuses to believe the Truth, or opposes it, it has not the least effect on Allah's holy Plan, which will go on to its completion; but it will deprive him of Grace and of any protection whatever; he will wander about as an outlaw in manifest helplessness.

...وَلَيْسَ لَهُ مِن دُونِهِ أَولِيَاء...

and no protectors can he have besides Allah:

...أُوْلَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٢)

such men (wander) in manifest error."

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَعْيَ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ...

33. See they not that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, and never wearied with their creation,

C4812. Cf. 2:255 (Verse of the Throne): "His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them."

He Whose power is constant and unwearied in creating and preserving all things in heaven and earth can surely give life to the dead at the Resurrection.

...بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَى...

is able to give life to the dead?

...بَلَى إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٣٣)

Yea, verily He has power over all things.

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ ...

34. And on the **Day that** the Unbelievers will be placed before the Fire, (they will be asked,)

C4813. Cf. 46:20, where the argument was closed about the undutiful son of a good father. After that the example of the 'Ad and of the believing Jinns was cited, and now is closed that argument in similar terms.

... أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ...

"Is this not the Truth?"

...قَالُوا بَلَى وَرَبِّنَا...

They will say, "Yea, by our Lord!"

...قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٣٤)

(One will say:) "Then taste ye the Penalty, for that ye were wont to deny (Truth)!"

C4814. The Truth which they denied is now all too clear to them. They are out of the Light of Truth, out of the Light of Allah's Countenance. And that in itself is a terrible Penalty.

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُوْلُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِل لَّهُمْ...

35. Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers).

...كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّن نَّهَارٍ...

On the Day that they see the (Punishment) promised them, (it will be) as if they had not tarried more than an hour in a single day.

C4815. All spiritual work proceeds in its own good time. We should never be impatient either about its success or about the punishment which is bound to come for those who oppose it or wish to suppress it.

The inevitable punishment is spoken of as the Punishment promised. It will come so soon and so suddenly that it will appear as if there was not the delay of a single hour in a single day!

Time is a great factor in our affairs in this world, but it hardly counts in the spiritual Kingdom.

... بَلَاغٌ ...

(Thine but) to proclaim the Message:

C4816. The Preacher's duty is to proclaim the Message in unmistakable terms. If any human beings come in the way, it will be to their own destruction; but none but rebellious transgressor will be punished. There is always hope and forgiveness for repentance and amendment.

... فَهَلْ يُهْلَكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٣٥)

but shall any be destroyed except those who transgress?

The Absolute Reality

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ

And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Muhammad

مُحَمَّدٍ

Introduction and Summary

We have examined and followed the current arrangement of the Surahs according to subject matter and independently of chronology, and we have found that a logical thread runs through them. We have now finished more than five-sixth of the Quran. The remaining sixth consists of short Surahs, but these are again grouped according to subject matter.

We begin the first of such groups with a group of three Surahs (47 to 49), which deal with the organisation of the Muslim Ummah or community both for external defence and in internal

relations. The present Surah deals with the necessity of defence against external foes by courage and strenuous fighting, and dates from about the first year of the Hijrah, when the Muslims were under threat of extinction by invasion from Makkah.

Summary- Aggressive hostility to Faith and Truth should be fought firmly, and Allah will guide (47:1-19, C. 220).

Faint-heartedness condemned; those who strive and those who turn away will be sorted out (47:20-38 and C. 221).

C.220 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(47:1-19)

No plots against Truth or Faith will succeed:
But those who follow both will be strengthened.
Be firm in the fight, and Allah will guide.
Rebellion against Allah is destruction; fidelity
Will cool the mind and feed the heart;
It will warm the affections and sweeten life.
Hypocrisy carries its own doom.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (١)

1. Those who reject Allah and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, their deeds will Allah render astray (From their mark).

C4817. Whatever they do will miss its mark, because Allah is the source of all energy and life. If the wicked try to persecute men or seduce them from the Truth, the result will be the opposite of what they intend.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ ...

2. But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and believe in the (Revelation) sent down to Muhammad - for it is the Truth from their Lord,

كَفَّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ (٢)...

He will remove from them their ills and improve their **condition**.

C4818. Bal means state or condition, whether external, or of the heart and mind. Both meanings apply here.

The more the wicked rage, the better will be the position of the righteous, and Allah will make it easier and easier for the righteous to love and follow the Truth.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْبَاطِلَ وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْحَقَّ

مِن رَّبِّهِمْ...

3. This because those who reject Allah follow vanities, while those who believe follow the Truth from their Lord:

كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ أَمْثَالَهُمْ (٣)...

Thus does Allah set forth for men their lessons **by similitudes**.

C4819. We learn the greatest moral lessons by parables and similitudes from things that happen in the outer world.

If a man goes after a mirage or a thing that has no real existence, he can never reach his goal, while the man that follows the kindly Light from Allah that leads him on must be happier in mind, sounder in heart, and firmer in life, generally for every moment that he lives.

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ ...

4. Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; at length,

C4820. When once the fight (Jihad) is entered upon, carry it out with the utmost vigour, and strike home your blows at the most vital points (smite at their necks), both literally and figuratively. You cannot wage war with kid gloves.

... حَتَّى إِذَا أَثْخَنتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ...

when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them):

C4821. In the first onset there must necessarily be great loss of life; "after the enemy's numbers are fairly thinned down,, prisoners may be taken". With this passage may be compared 8:67, and n. 1234.

...فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاء حَتَّى تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا...

thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or **ransom**: Until the war lays down its burdens.

C4822. When once the enemy is brought under control, generosity (i.e., the release of prisoners without ransom) or ransom is recommended.

...ذَلِكَ...

Thus (are ye commanded):

... وَلَوْ يَشَاء اللَّهُ لَانتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلَكِن لِّيَبْلُوَ بَعْضَكُم بِبَعْضٍ...

but if it had been Allah's Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them (Himself); but (He lets you fight) in order to **test** you, some with others.

C4823. The Believers are tested in Faith by the extent to which they are willing to make sacrifices, even to the laying down of their lives; and the enemies are tested as to whether they would repent and let the righteous five in freedom and security.

...وَالَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَن يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٤)

But those who are **slain** in the way of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost.

C4824. There are two alternative readings,

- **qatalu,** "those who fight", and
- **qutilu,** "those who are slain".

The meaning under the first reading is wider, and includes that under the second.

I have translated on the basis of the second reading, which is in accordance with the text of the Royal Egyptian edition.

سَيَهْدِيهِمْ وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ (٥)

5. Soon will He **guide them** and improve their condition.

C4825. If we read "who are slain" in the last clause but one of verse 4, (see last note), "guide" would mean "guide them in their journey after death".

Improve their conditions: see n. 4818 above.

If after death, their minds and hearts will be more and more settled and rest, and their spiritual satisfaction greater.

وَيُدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ عَرَّفَهَا لَهُمْ (٦)

6. And admit them to the **Garden** which He has announced for them.

C4826. "The Garden which He has made known to them": the state of bliss which is declared in Revelation to be destined for those who serve Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ (٧)

7. O ye who believe!

if ye will aid (the cause of) Allah, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَتَعْسًا لَّهُمْ وَأَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٨)

8. But those who reject (Allah), for them is destruction, and (Allah) will render their deeds astray (from their mark).

C4827. See above, 471I and n. 4817.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٩)

9. That is because they hate the Revelation of Allah; so He has made **their deeds fruitless.**

C4828. Their deeds are **"fruitless"** in the sense that they are vain; they do not produce the results intended by their doers.

But they will not be exempt from producing the natural consequences of evil, viz., further degradation and misery for the soul.

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

10. Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the End of those before them (who did evil)?

C4829. The end of evil is evil. All past history and tradition shows that. Will not men of every generation learn that lesson?

Allah helps His servants, but those who rebel against Allah have no one to help them.

دَمَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ أَمْثَالُهَا (١٠)...

Allah brought utter destruction on them, and similar (fates await) those who reject Allah.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ لَا مَوْلَى لَهُمْ (١١)

11. That is because Allah is the Protector of those who believe, but those who reject Allah have no protector.

Section 2

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

12. Verily Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow;

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَتَمَتَّعُونَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ وَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّهُمْ (١٢)

while those who reject Allah will enjoy (this world) and eat as cattle eat; and the Fire will be their abode.

C4830. An apt simile.

Beasts of the field eat their fill, but have no higher interests. Men who worship the world exclusively are no better: their pleasures and enjoyments rise no higher then those of the beasts of the field. They have no inkling of spiritual happiness.

On the contrary, as they were endowed with spiritual faculties which they misused, they will not escape the Fire of Punishment, the Penalty of Sin.

...وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ هِيَ أَشَدُّ قُوَّةً مِّن قَرْيَتِكَ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَتْكَ

13. And how many cities, with more power than thy city which has **driven thee out,** have We destroyed (for their sins)?

C4831. A reference to Pagan Makkah, which drove out the holy Prophet because of his righteousness and because he preached Repentance.

The date of this Surah must therefore be after the Hijrah.

...أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَهُمْ (١٣)

And there was none to aid them.

...أَفَمَن كَانَ عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ كَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ

14. Is then one who is on a **clear** (Path) from his Lord, no better than one to whom the evil of his conduct seems pleasing,

C4832. Clear, or enlightened; a Path on which shines the Light of Allah.

...وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءهُمْ (١٤)

and such as follow their own lusts?

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِّن مَّاء غَيْرِ آسِنٍ ...

15. (Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised:

in it are

- rivers of water incorruptible:

C4833. In this description there are four kinds of drinks and all kinds of fruits; and the summing up of all delights in the "Forgiveness from their Lord".

The four kinds of drinks are:

- delicious, cool, pure water, not like earthly water, for it never suffers corruption;

وَأَنْهَارٌ مِن لَّبَنٍ لَّمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ ...

- rivers of milk of which the taste never changes;

- milk which never turns Sour, whose taste is like that of fresh warm milk drawn from the udder;

... وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ خَمْرٍ لَّذَّةٍ لِّلشَّارِبِينَ ...

- rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink;

- wine, not like any wine on earth, for it leaves no headaches behind, and causes no intoxication, which is a kind of madness or poison, but is ever a joy to drink; and

...وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّى...

- and rivers of honey pure and clear.

- honey, pure and clear, with no admixture of wax or any foreign substance.

These drinks, will cool the spirit, feed the heart, warm the affections, and sweeten life. (R).

...وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ...

- In it there are for them all kinds of fruits,

C4834. See n. 4671 to 43:73. [Eds.]

... وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ...

and Grace from their Lord.

C4835. Grace from their Lord: that is the covering up or blotting out of sin and all that was sad or unsatisfactory in the lower life;

the pure Light from the Countenance of Allah Most High: 92:20.

...كَمَنْ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِي النَّارِ وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءَهُمْ (١٥)

(Can those in such Bliss) be compared to such as shall dwell for ever in the Fire, and be given, to drink, boiling water, so that it cuts up their bowels (to pieces)?

C4836. Cf. 37:66-67, and n. 4074.

Just as the Bliss of the Blessed will penetrate their being through and through, so the agony of the condemned ones will penetrate their being through and through.

"Bowels"besides meaning their inmost being, also suggests the seat of their feelings and affection.

...وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ

16. And among them are men who listen to thee,

...حَتَّى إِذَا خَرَجُوا مِنْ عِندِكَ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا قَالَ آنِفًا...

but in the end, when they go out from **thee**, they say to those who have received Knowledge:

"What is it he said just then?"

C4837. Cf. 10:42, and n. 1434; also 6:25, 36, and n. 857.

The case here referred to is that of the Hypocrites who came to the assemblies of Islam in Madinah and pretended to listen to the Prophet's teaching and preaching. But their heart and mind were not in learning righteousness, but in carping at things they saw and heard.

When they got out, they knew nothing of the teaching, but on the contrary asked foolish and ignorant questions, such as might raise doubts.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ (١٦)...

Such are men whose hearts Allah has sealed, and who follow their own lusts.

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ (١٧)

17. But to those who **receive Guidance,** He increases (the light of) Guidance, and bestows on them their Piety and Restraint (from evil).

C4838. Spiritual advancement is progressive: each step makes the next ones easier and more complete.

فَهَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَن تَأْتِيَهُم بَغْتَةً...

18. Do they then only **wait** for the Hour, that it should come on them of a sudden?

C4839. Cf. 43:66, and n. 4665.

فَقَدْ جَاءَ أَشْرَاطُهَا...

But already have come some **tokens** thereof,

C4840. The sands of time are always running, and when a wrong is done, the time for its punishment is approaching every moment. No one should therefore wait.

The time for repentance is Now at any given time. When the punishment comes, it is too late for repentance, and all admonition would be useless.

Looking to the particular time when this Surah was revealed, viz., about a year after the Hijrah, already there were Signs that the plans of the Pagans to crush Islam were crumbling to pieces. The Hijrah showed how much good-will there was in Madinah for the holy Prophet of Allah, and how many people from Makkah adhered to him, The battle of Badr showed that they could hold their own against odds of three to one.

...فَأَنَّى لَهُمْ إِذَا جَاءتْهُمْ ذِكْرَاهُمْ (١٨)

and when it (actually) is on them, how can they benefit then by their admonition?

...فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

19. Know, therefore, that

there is no god but Allah,

and ask forgiveness for the **fault**, and for the men and women who believe:

C4841. Cf. 40:55, and n. 4428.

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ (١٩)

for Allah knows how **ye** move about and how ye dwell in your homes.

C4842. The time and manner of our conducting ourselves at home and when we move about on our business are all material to the judgment of our conduct, and for every nuance in our moral and spiritual progress, we must seek Allah's help and guidance.

C.221 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(47:20-38)

Those eager for service want the call for service;
But the hypocrites blanch at such call.
If it were not obeyed, and evil should get
The upper hand, will it not stalk arrogant
Over the land, and trample under foot
All claims of right and kinship? Fight it,
And fail not in the test of your mettle. Be hold
And establish the Flag of Righteousness
In the highest places. Thus comes Peace,
For which due sacrifice must be made.

Section 3

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُورَةٌ...

20. Those who believe say, "Why is not a Surah sent down (for us)?"

C4843. The men of faith and loyalty are eager and anxious to get a command to serve the Cause even if it be at the sacrifice of their lives. Not so the Hypocrites, "those in whose hearts is a disease". They are mortally afraid as mentioned below.

...فَإِذَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ مُّحْكَمَةٌ وَذُكِرَ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ...

But when a Surah of basic or **categorical** meaning is revealed, and fighting is mentioned therein,

C4844. Cf. 37:7, and n. 347.

The defence of truth and righteousness at all sacrifice, when a definite and categorical command issues from the ruler of an Islamic state is a fundamental condition of enlistment in the cause of Allah.

It is true that Punishment and Judgment belong to Allah alone; but our mettle and fidelity have to be tested, (see verse 4 above), and Allah uses human agency in human affairs. (R).

...رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ يَنظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ نَظَرَ الْمَغْشِيِّ

عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ...

thou wilt see those in whose hearts is a **disease** looking at thee with a look of one in swoon at the approach of death:

C4845. Cf. 2:10.

The **disease** is hypocrisy, disloyalty to the Cause, want of courage and of the spirit of self-sacrifice, want of true understanding.

...فَأَوْلَى لَهُمْ (٢٠)

but more fitting for them --

طَاعَةٌ وَقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ فَإِذَا عَزَمَ الْأَمْرُ فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللَّهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ (٢١)

21. Were it to obey and say what is just,

and when a **matter** is resolved on, it were best for them if they were true to Allah.

C4846. The resolution is not taken except under guidance from Allah. Those, therefore, who fail to implement it by their own effort and sacrifice, are not true to Allah.

And such disloyalty or cowardice is not even good for them from a worldly point of view. With what face can they meet their friends after their disgraceful conduct?

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَن تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ (٢٢)

22. Then, is it to be expected of you, if ye will do no mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin?

C4847. It is no use to say, as the Quraish said, that it is not seemly to fight against kith and kin. From one point of view the stand against sin brings "not peace, but a sword". It is a case of either subduing evil or being subdued by evil. If evil gets the upper hand, it is not likely to respect ties of kith and kin. It did not in the case of the holy Prophet and his adherents, and had to be suppressed, to bring about the conditions necessary for peace.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَصَمَّهُمْ وَأَعْمَىٰ أَبْصَارَهُمْ (٢٣)

23. Such are the men whom Allah has **cursed** for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.

C4848. Cursed: i.e., deprived of His Grace: left them straying, because they deliberately rejected His guidance. The result is that what they hear is as if they had not heard, and what they see is as if they had not seen.

They have no desire to understand Allah's Will or Allah's Revelation;-

or is it that they have themselves locked and bolted their hearts and minds, so that nothing can penetrate them?

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا (٢٤)

24. Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'án, or are their hearts locked up by them?

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَى أَدْبَارِهِم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَى...

25. **Those who turn back as apostates** after Guidance was clearly shown to them,

C4849. Such men are entirely in the hands of Satan. They follow his suggestions, and their hopes are built on his deceptions.

...الشَّيْطَانُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ وَأَمْلَى لَهُمْ (٢٥)

the Evil One has instigated them and buoyed them up with false hopes.

... ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ كَرِهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ ...

26. This, because they said to those who hate what Allah has revealed,

C4850. They have become so impervious to facts and truths, because, without the courage to oppose Allah's Cause openly, they secretly intrigue with Allah's enemies, and say that they will follow them part of the way, and by remaining partly in the other camp, they will be far more useful as spies and half-hearted doubters than by going over altogether. If they think that this game will be successful, they are mistaken.

... سَنُطِيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ...

"We will obey you in part of (this) matter;"

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِسْرَارَهُمْ (٢٦)

but Allah knows their (inner) secrets.

All the inner secrets and motives of their hearts are known to Allah. Cf. 59:11.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ...

27. But **how** (will it be) when the angels take their souls at death,

C4851. It is all very well for them to practice hypocrisy in this life. How will they feel at death, when they find that the angels know all, and touch the very spots they had taken such care to conceal?

... يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ (٢٧)

and smite their faces and their backs?

C4852. Their faces and their backs:

there is a subtle metaphor.

- The face is what looks to the front, the side you present to the outer world; the back is what is not shown, what is hidden from the world. The hypocrites will be hit at both points.
- Or, the face is what they boast of, what they are proud of; the back is the skeleton in the cupboard, the things they dare not utter, but which yet haunt them. The hypocrites are hit on every side. Cf. 8:50.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمُ اتَّبَعُوا مَا أَسْخَطَ اللَّهَ وَكَرِهُوا رِضْوَانَهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٢٨)

28. This because they followed that which called forth the Wrath of Allah, and they hated Allah's good pleasure; so He made their deeds of no effect.

Section 4

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ أَن لَّن يُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ أَضْغَانَهُمْ (٢٩)

29. Or do those in **whose** hearts is a disease, think that Allah will not bring to light all their rancor?

C4853. Cf. verse 20 above, and n. 4845.

Being diseased at the very core of their being, they do not understand the simplest facts of spiritual life.

وَلَوْ نَشَاء لَأَرَيْنَاكَهُمْ فَلَعَرَفْتَهُم بِسِيمَاهُمْ ...

30. Had We so willed, We could have shown them up to thee, and thou shouldst have known **them by their marks**:

C4854. Evil is not always necessarily branded in this life with a distinguishing mark or brand. But the discerning ones know. Evil is betrayed by its speech and behaviour.

... وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِي لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ...

but surely thou wilt know them by the tone of their speech!

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٠)

And Allah knows All that ye do.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ...

31. And We shall **try** you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience;

C4855. Cf. 34:21, and n. 3821.

The test and trial is for our own psychological development, to help in the exercise of such choice as has been given to us in our free- will.

Cf. also 3:154, and n. 467.

...وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ (٣١)

and We shall try your reported (mettle).

C4856. Akhbar: the things reported of you; reputation for courage and constancy, which has to be brought to the test of facts and experience.

In an epigram of Tacitus we are told of a Roman Emperor that he would have been considered in every way to have been worthy of being a ruler if only he had never ruled! So in life people may think us courageous, true, noble, and self-sacrificing; and we may consider ourselves as possessing all such virtues; but it is actual experience that will bring them to the test.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ...

32. Those who reject Allah, hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, and resist the Messenger,

...مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَى لَن يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا...

after Guidance has been clearly shown to **them**, will not injure Allah in the least,

C4857. Cf. verse 25 above, and verse 34 below:

- in verse 25 was shown the source of the evil. viz., yielding to the deceptions of Satan;
- in this verse are shown the proximate consequences of such yielding to evil, viz., failure of all we do;
- and in verse 34 below are shown the eternal consequences, viz., our deprivation of Allah's Grace and Mercy.

...وَسَيُحْبِطُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٣٢)

but He will make their deeds of no effect.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا

أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٣)

33. O ye who believe!

obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and make not vain your deeds!

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

34. Those who reject Allah,

C4858. See last note.

... وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ (٣٤)

and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, then die rejecting Allah, Allah will not forgive them.

فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلْمِ...

35. Be not weary and faint-hearted crying for peace.

وَأَنتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَن يَتِرَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٥)

When ye should be Uppermost: for Allah is with you, and will never put you in loss for your (good) deeds.

C4859. To those who are trying to root out evil, and have authority to do so, the question is not of peace or conflict, but of whether Good or Evil is to prevail. They must remember that Good must ultimately prevail, and Allah's help is with those who, as far as men can, are trying to further the universal Plan.

Cf. n. 4847 to verse 22 above.

إِنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ...

36. The life of this world is but play and amusement:

C4860. Cf. 6:32, and n. 855; and 29:64, and n. 3497 .

Amusement and play are not bad things in themselves. As preparations for the more serious life, they have their value. But if we concentrate on them, and neglect the business of life, we cannot prosper. So we must use our life in this world as a preparation for the next life.

وَإِن تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا يُؤْتِكُمْ أُجُورَكُمْ وَلَا يَسْأَلْكُمْ أَمْوَالَكُمْ (٣٦)...

and if ye believe land guard against evil, He will grant you your recompense, and will not ask you (to give up) your possessions.

C4861. Complete self-sacrifice, if voluntarily offered, has a meaning:

it means that the persons devotion is exclusively and completely for the Cause. But no law or rule can demand it. And a mere offer to kill yourself has no meaning. You should be ready to take risks to your life in fighting for the Cause, but you should aim at life, not death.

If you live, you should be ready to place your substance and your acquisitions at the disposal of the Cause. But it is not reasonable to pauperise yourself and become a hanger- on for the Cause.

Moreover, the inborn tendency to self-preservation in an average man would lead to concealment and niggardliness if all were asked for the Cause, by Law, and there would further be a feeling of bitterness and rebellion.

إِن يَسْأَلْكُمُوهَا فَيُحْفِكُمْ تَبْخَلُوا ...

37. If He were to ask you for all of them, and press you, ye would covetously withhold,

C4862. Cf. 3:180.

... وَيُخْرِجْ أَضْغَانَكُمْ (٣٧)

and He would bring out all your ill-feeling.

C4863. Cf. above, verse 29.

Rancour or ill-feeling, or any desire but that of devotion, should never be given a handle in a wise Law.

هَاأَنتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

38. Behold, ye are **those** invited to spend (of your substance) in the way of Allah:

C4864. Here the case of the special devotee and of the average man with his human foibles are distinguished.

Stinginess is not a virtue: it hurts more the finer-nature of the individual practicing it that it hurts the Cause.

Allah is free of all wants and independent of any need that we can meet. His Cause is similarly independent of human aid. But it uses human agency for our own human advancement. The need to be able to serve Allah's cause is ours. We are the needy beggars who should claim the privilege before the Lord of Bounties unbounded. (R).

فَمِنكُم مَّن يَبْخَلُ وَمَن يَبْخَلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخَلُ عَن نَّفْسِهِ...

but among you are some that are niggardly.

But any who are niggardly are so at the expense of their own souls.

...وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنتُمُ الْفُقَرَاء...

But Allah is free of all wants, and it is ye that are needy.

... وَإِن تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ (٣٨)

If ye turn back (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another people;

then they would not be like you!

C4865. If we desert the Cause, the Cause will not fail. Better men than we will uphold the flag. But we should fall, and others will take our place, who are not so timid, half- hearted, or stingy. In Wordsworth's words, "High Heaven rejects the lore of nicely calculated less or more."

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا

We have truly sent thee as a witness, as a bringer of Glad Tidings, and as a Warner:

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Fath

الْفَتْح

Introduction and Summary

1. This is the second of the group of three Madinah Surahs describes in the introduction to Surah 47. Its date is fixed by the mention of Treaty of Hudaybiyah, Dhu al Qadah A.H. 6 i.e. February 628 (see n. 1261 t0 9:13).

2. Hudaybiyah is a plain, a short day's march to the north Makkah, a little to the west of Madinah-Makkah road, as used in the Prophet's time. Six years had passed since the Prophet had left his beloved City, and it has been in the hands of the Pagan autocracy. But Islam had grown during

these six years. Its Qiblah was towards the Ka'bah. The Pagans had tried to attack Islam at various times and had been foiled. By Arab custom every Arab was entitled to visit the Sacred Enclosure unarmed, and fighting of any kind was prohibited during the Sacred Months (see n. 209 to 2:194), which included the month of Dhu al Qadah. In the Dhu al Qadah A.H. 8, therefore, the Prophet desired to perform the Umrah for lesser pilgrimage (n. 212 to 2:196), unarmed, but accompanied with his followers. A large following joined him, to the number of fourteen to fifteen hundred.

3. This was not to the liking of the Pagan autocracy at Makkah, which took alarm, and in breach of all Arab traditions and usage, prepared to prevent the peaceful party from performing the rites of pilgrimage. They marched out to fight the unarmed party. The Prophet turned a little to the west of the road, and encamped at Hudaybiyah, where negotiations took place. On the one hand, the Prophet was unwilling to give the Quraysh any pretended excuse for violence in the Sacred Territory; on the other, the Quraysh had learnt, by six years' bitter experience, that their power was crumbling in its powers of organisation and resistance. The enthusiasm with which the Covenant of Fealty was entered into under a tree in Hudaybiyah (48:18) by the great multitude united in devotion to their great leader, was evidence of the great power which he commanded even in a worldly sense if the Quraysh had chosen to try conclusions with him.

4. A peaceful Treaty was therefore concluded, known as the Treaty of Hudaybiyah. It stipulated:

    (1) that there was to be peace between the parties for ten years;

    (2) that any tribe or person was free to join either party or make an alliance with it;

    (3) that if a Quraysh person from Makkah, under guardianship, should join the Prophet without the guardian's permission, he (or she) should be sent back to the guardian, but in the contrary case, they should not be sent back;; and

(4) that the Prophet and his party were not to enter Makkah that year, but that they could enter unarmed the following year.

5. Item3, not being reciprocal, was objected to in the Muslim camp, but it really was of little importance Muslims under guardianship, sent back to Makkah, were not likely to renounce the blessings of Islam; on the the hand Muslims going to Makkah, would be centres of influence for Islam, and it was more important that should be allowed to remain there than that they should be sent back to Madinah. It was impossible to think that there would be apostates or renegades to Paganism! "Look on this picture, and on that!"

6. The Muslims faithfully observed the terms of Treaty. The following year (A.H. 7) they performed the lesser Pilgrimage in great state for three days. It is true that the Makkans later on broke the Peace in the attack which one of their allied tribes (the Banu Bakr) made on the Muslim Banu Khuzaah (who were in alliance with Prophet), but this led to the conquest of Makkah and the sweeping away of the autocracy. Meanwhile Hudaybiyah was a great victory, morally and socially, as well as politically, and its lessons are expounded in the Surah, as the lessons of Badr were expounded in *:42-48, and of Uhud in 3:121-129, 149-180.

Summary- Victory comes from cool courage, devotion, faith, and patience, as shown at Hudaybiyah; therefore remember Allah, and follow His Prophet (48:1-29, C. 222).

C.222 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Victory and Help go with calmness of mind,
Faith, fidelity, zeal, and earnestness,
Not with greed, lukewarmness, or timidity.
Discipline and obedience are essential
For service. The reward for service are not
To be measured by immediate results,
But accrue in countless hidden ways
For Patience and Restraint. Be strong

Against Evil, but kind and gentle amongst Yourselves: the seed will grow and become Strong, to your wonder and delight.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا (١)

1. Verily We have granted thee a manifest Victory:

C4866. This is best referred to the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, for which see the Introduction to this Surah. By this Treaty the Makkan Quraish, after many years of unrelenting conflict with Islam, at length recognised Islam as (what they thought) an equal power with themselves.

In reality the door was then opened for the free spread of Islam throughout Arabia and thence through the world.

لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ...

2. That Allah may forgive thee thy faults of the past and those to follow;

C4867. See n. 4428 to 40:55, and Cf. 47:19.

Any mistakes of the past were now rectified, and any future ones prevented by the free scope now offered, by the act of the Quraish Pagans themselves, to the recognition and free promulgation of Islam.

... وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا (٢)

fulfil His favor to thee; and guide thee on the Straight Way;

وَيَنصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا (٣)

3. And that Allah may help thee with powerful help.

C4868. Three objects or results of the Treaty are mentioned:

- forgiveness, which is equivalent to Mercy,

- fulfilment of the dignity of Prophethood with the dignity of an effective and recognised position in Arabia;
- opening up a straight way leading to Islam, by access to Makkah from next year, Makkah being the symbolic centre of Islam.

These three are summed up in the comprehensive phrase **"powerful (or effective) help"**.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ...

4. It is He who sent down Tranquility into the hearts of the Believers,

C4869. The results were achieved by tranquility, calmness, and cool courage among the 1400 to 1500 unarmed men who accompanied the Prophet to Hudaybiyah and who were threatened with violence by the excited Quraish leaders of Makkah.

... لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَّعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ...

that they may Add Faith to their Faith;

C4870. It is a casuistical question to ask.

Are there degrees in Faith?

The plain meaning is that believers will see one Sign of Allah after another, and with each their Faith is confirmed. During all the long years of persecution and conflict they had Faith, but when they see their old enemies actually coming out to negotiate with them, their Faith is justified, fulfilled, and confirmed: and they turn in gratitude to Allah.

...وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

for to Allah belong the Forces of the heavens and the earth;

C4871. There are visible forces which you see in the physical world. Men fight with armed forces, and the Muslims had to defend themselves with arms also, and not without success.

But social, moral, and spiritual forces were fighting for them under Allah's command, and they were the real

forces that established the Message of Islam and the position of its Leader and Preacher.

... وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٤)

and Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom;

لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

5. That He may admit the men and women who believe, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein for aye,

C4872. This clause is coordinated to the previous clause, "'That they may add Faith to their Faith".

The intervening words, "For to Allah ... and Wisdom" are parenthetical. The third coordinate clause comes in the next verse, "And that He may punish .....

The skeleton construction will be, -Allah sends down calm courage to Believers in order that they may be confirmed in their Faith; that they may qualify for the Bliss of Heaven; and that the evil ones may receive the punishment they deserve."

...وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عِندَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا (٥)

and remove their ills from them;

and that is, in the sight of Allah, the highest achievement (For man)

وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ...

6. And that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Polytheists, men and women,

...الظَّانِّينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ...

who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round of Evil:

C4873. They will be encircled (or hemmed in) by Evil.

... وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

the Wrath of Allah is on them:

... وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءتْ مَصِيرًا (٦)

He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them: and evil is it for a destination.

C4874. That is, deprived them of His Grace, on account of their continued rejection of it.

وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

7. For to Allah belong the Forces of the heavens and the earth;

C4875. These words are repeated (with a slight change) from the parenthetical clause in verse 4. to emphasize the assertion as a substantive proposition, that fighting and visible forces in the physical world are not the only forces with which Allah works out His Plan. invisible forces are more important as they were at Hudaybiyah.

The slight difference is instructive; in the parenthetical clause, Allah's Knowledge was emphasized, and in the substantive clause it is Allah's Power. Knowledge plans, and Power executes.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٧)

and Allah is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٨)

8. We have truly sent thee as a witness, as a bringer of Glad Tidings, and as a Warner:

C4876. The Prophet came in order to establish Faith in Allah and true worship. We can view him in three capacities:

- as a witness to help the weak if they were oppressed and check the strong if they did wrong;
- as a giver of the Glad Tidings of Allah's Grace and Mercy to those who repented and lived good lives; and
- as one who warned sinners of the consequences of their sin.

لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...

9. In order that ye (o men) may believe in Allah and His Messenger,

... وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٩)

that ye may assist and honor Him, and celebrate His praises morning and evening.

C4876a. Assist and honour Him: most commentators agree that the pronoun 'Him' refers to Allah, while a few believe it refers to the Holy Prophet. [Eds.]

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ ...

10. Verily those who plight their fealty to thee do no less than plight their fealty to Allah:

C4877. In the Hudaybiyah negotiations, when it was uncertain whether the Quraish would treat well or ill the Prophet's delegate to Makkah, there was a great wave of feeling in the Muslim camp of 1400 to 1500 men. They came with great enthusiasm and swore their fealty to the Prophet, by placing hand on hand according to the Arab custom: see paragraph 3 of the Introduction to this Surah.

This in itself was a wonderful demonstration of moral and material strength, a true Victory: it is called **Baiat ur Ridhwan** (Fealty of Allah's Good Pleasure) in Islamic History. They placed their hands on the Prophet's hand, but the Hand of Allah was above them, and He accepted their Fealty.

...يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ ...

the Hand of Allah is over their hands:

...فَمَن نَّكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ ...

Then anyone who violates His oath, does so to the harm of his own soul,

...وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهُ اللَّهَ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (١٠)

and anyone who fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah, Allah will soon grant him a great Reward.

'Alaihu is an archaic form for **'Alaihi**.

Section 2

سَيَقُولُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَا أَمْوَالُنَا وَأَهْلُونَا ...

11. The desert Arabs who lagged behind will say to thee: "We were engaged in (looking after) our flocks and herds, and our families;

C4878. When the Prophet started from Madinah on the Makkah journey which ended in Hudaybiyah, he asked all Muslims to join him in the pious undertaking, and he had a splendid response.

But some of the desert tribes hung back and made excuses. Their faith was but lukewarm, and they did not want to share in any trouble which the Makkah might give to the unarmed Muslims on pilgrimage. Their excuse that they were engaged in looking after their flocks and herds and their families was an after-thought, and in any case made after the return of the Prophet and his party with enhanced prestige to Madinah.

... فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا...

do thou then ask forgiveness for us."

...يَقُولُونَ بِأَلْسِنَتِهِم مَّا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts.

C4879. They said this with their tongues, but no thought of piety was in their hearts.

...قُلْ فَمَن يَمْلِكُ لَكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ ضَرًّا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا ...

Say:

"Who then has any power at all (to intervene) on your behalf with Allah, if His will is to give you some loss or to give you some profit?

C4880. Their false excuse was based on a calculation of worldly profit and loss. But what about the spiritual loss in detaching themselves from the holy Prophet or spiritual profit in joining in the splendidly loyal feelings of service and obedience which were demonstrated at Hudaybiyah?

And in any case they need not think that all their real and secret motives were not known to Allah.

...بَلْ كَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١١)

but Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.

...بَلْ ظَنَنتُمْ أَن لَّن يَنقَلِبَ الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا

12. "Nay, ye thought that the Messenger and the Believers would never return to their families;

...وَزُيِّنَ ذَٰلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَنتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ

this seemed pleasing in your hearts, and ye conceived an evil thought,

C4881. Their faith was so shaky that they thought the worst would happen, and that the Makkan Quraish would destroy the unarmed band. In their heart of hearts they would not have been sorry, because they were steeped in wickedness and rejoiced in the sufferings of others. But such persons will burn in the fire of their own disappointment.

...وَكُنتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا (١٢)

for ye are a people lost (in wickedness)."

وَمَن لَّمْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَعِيرًا (١٣)

13. And if any believe not in Allah and His Messenger, We have prepared, for those who reject Allah, a Blazing Fire!

... وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

14. To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth:

... يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ...

He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills:

C4882. Evil must inevitably have its punishment, but there is one way of escape, viz., through repentance and the Mercy of Allah. Allah's Justice will punish, but Allah's Mercy will forgive; and the Mercy is the predominant feature in Allah's universe: "He is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful."

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (١٤)

but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

سَيَقُولُ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ إِذَا انطَلَقْتُمْ إِلَى مَغَانِمَ لِتَأْخُذُوهَا ذَرُونَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ ...

15. Those who lagged behind (will say), when ye (are free to) march and take booty (in war): "Permit us to follow you."

C4883. Now comes out another motive behind the minds of the laggards. The journey for pilgrimage had no promise of war booty. If at any future time there should be a promise of booty they would come! But that is to reverse Allah's law and decree. **Jihad** is not for personal gain or booty: see Surah 8. and Introduction to Surah 8., paragraph 2. On the contrary **Jihad** is hard striving, in war and peace, in the Cause of Allah.

...يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُبَدِّلُوا كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ...

They wish to change Allah's decree:

...قُل لَّن تَتَّبِعُونَا كَذَٰلِكُمْ ...

Say: "Not thus will ye follow us:

C4884. Not thus: i.e., not on those terms; not if your object is only to gain booty.

... قَالَ اللَّهُ مِن قَبْلُ ...

Allah has already declared (this) beforehand":

C4885. See 8:1, and n. 1179.

...فَسَيَقُولُونَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُونَنَا ...

then they will say, "but ye are jealous of us."

C4886. The desert Arabs loved fighting and plunder and understood such motives for war. The higher motives seemed to be beyond them. Like ignorant men they attributed petty motives or motives of jealousy if they were kept out of the vulgar circle of fighting for plunder. But they had to be schooled, and they were schooled to higher ideas of discipline, self-sacrifice, and striving hard for a Cause.

...بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٥)

Nay, but little do they understand (such things).

... قُل لِّلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ

16. Say to the desert Arabs who lagged behind:

C4887. While they are reproached for their supineness in the march which led to Hudaybiyah, where there was danger but no prospect of booty, they are promised, if they learn discipline, to be allowed to follow the Banner of Islam where (as happened later in the Persian and Byzantine Wars) there was real fighting with formidable and well- organized armies.

... سَتُدْعَوْنَ إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ ...

"Ye shall be summoned (to fight) against a people given to vehement war:

C4888. Cf. 27:33.

...تُقَاتِلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسْلِمُونَ ...

then shall ye fight, or they shall submit.

C4889. That is, you shall go forth to war if you learn discipline, not for booty, but for a great and noble Cause. For if your opponents submit to the Cause, there will be no fighting and no booty.

...فَإِن تُطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ...

Then if ye show obedience, Allah will grant you a goodly reward,

وَإِن تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُم مِّن قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٦)

but if ye turn back as ye did before, He will punish you with a grievous Penalty."

لَّيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَىٰ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى

الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ ...

17. No blame is there on the blind, nor is there blame on the lame, nor on one ill (if he joins not the war):

...وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ...

but he that obeys Allah and His Messenger, (Allah) will admit him to Gardens beneath which rivers flow;

C4890. There may be neither fighting nor booty. But all who obey the call to **Jihad** with perfect discipline will get the Rewards of the Hereafter.

The blind, the maimed, and the infirm will of course be exempted from active compliance with the Call, but they can render such services as are within their power, and then they will not he excluded from the reward.

...وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ يُعَذِّبْهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٧)

and he who turns back, (Allah) will punish him with a grievous Penalty.

Section 3

لَّقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ...

18. Allah's Good Pleasure was on the believers ...

C4891. The noun from the verb **radhiya** is **Ridhwan** (Good Pleasure); hence the name of this **Baiat, Baiat ur Ridhwan**, the Fealty of Allah's Good Pleasure: see n. 4877 to 48:10.

... إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ...

... when they swore Fealty to thee under the Tree:

C4892. The great ceremony of the Fealty of Allah's Good Pleasure took place while the holy Prophet sat under a tree in the plain of Hudaybiyah. (R).

...فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ...

He **knew** what was in their hearts,

C4893. Or tested: see n. 4855 to 47:31.

... فَأَنزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

and He sent down tranquility to them,

C4894. Sakina = Peace, calm, sense of security and confidence, tranquility. Cf. above 48:4, and n. 4869.

The same word is used in connection with the battle of Hunain in 9:26, and in connection with the Cave of Thaur at an early stage in the Hijrah: 9:40.

... وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا (١٨)

and He rewarded them with a speedy Victory;

C4895. The Treaty of Hudaybiyah itself was a "speedy Victory": it followed immediately after the Bayah.

... وَمَغَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً يَأْخُذُونَهَا

19. And many gains will they acquire (besides):

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (١٩)

and Allah is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom.

... وَعَدَكُمُ اللَّهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً تَأْخُذُونَهَا

20. Allah has promised you many gains that ye shall acquire,

C4896. The gains so far seen from the Baiat and their calm and disciplined behaviour were certainly great: in the rapid spread of Islam, in the clearance from the Sacred House of the idolatrous autocracy, and in the universal acceptance of the Message of Allah in Arabia.

...فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هَذِهِ وَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنكُمْ ...

and He has given you these beforehand; and He has restrained the hands of men from you;

C4897. The first fruits of the Baiat were the victory or treaty of Hudaybiyah, the cessation for the time being of the hostility of the Makkan Quraish, and the opening out of the way to Makkah. These things are implied in the phrase, "He has restrained the hands of men from you."

...وَلِتَكُونَ آيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا (٢٠)

that it may be a Sign for the Believers, and that He may guide you to a Straight Path;

C4898. Hudaybiyah (in both the Bayah and the Treaty) was truly a sign-post for the Believers: it showed the solidarity of Islam, and the position which the Muslims had won in the Arab world.

وَأُخْرَىٰ لَمْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ أَحَاطَ اللَّهُ بِهَا ...

21. And other gains (there are), which are not within your power, but which Allah has compassed:

C4899. Other gains: these are usually referred to the later victories of Islam, but we must view them not merely in their political or material aspect, but chiefly in the rise of Islam as a world power morally and spiritually.

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا (٢١)

and Allah has power over all things.

وَلَوْ قَاتَلَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوَلَّوُا الْأَدْبَارَ ...

22. If the Unbelievers should fight you, they would certainly turn their backs;

C4900. Their morale was now truly broken.

... ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (٢٢)

then would they find neither protector nor helper.

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلُ ...

23. (Such has been) the practice. (Approved) of Allah already in the past:

C4901. Cf. 33:62.

... وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا (٢٣)

no change wilt thou find in the practice (approved) of Allah.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُم بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ ...

24. And it is He who has restrained their hands from you and your hand from them in the midst of Mecca,

C4902. Little incidents had taken place that might have plunged the Quraish and the Muslims from Madinah into

a fight. On the one hand, the Quraish were determined to keep out the Muslims, which they had no right to do: and on the other hand, the Muslims, though unarmed, had sworn to stand together, and if they had counter-attacked they could have forced their entrance to the Ka'bah, the centre of Makkah. But Allah restrained both sides from anything that would have violated the Peace of the Sanctuary, and after the Treaty was signed, all danger was past.

...مِن بَعْدِ أَنْ أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا (٢٤)

after that He gave you the victory over them. And Allah sees well all that ye do.

هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيَ مَعْكُوفًا

أَن يَبْلُغَ مَحِلَّهُ...

25. They are the ones who denied revelation and hindered you from the Sacred Mosque and the sacrificial animals, detained from reaching their place of sacrifice.

C4903. The Muslims from Madinah had brought the animals for sacrifice with them, and had put on the Ihram or pilgrim's garb (see n. 217 to 2:197), but they were not only prevented from entering Makkah, but were also prevented from sending the sacrificial animals to the place of sacrifice in Makkah, as they could have done under 2:196.

The sacrifice was therefore actually offered at Hudaybiyah.

...وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُونَ وَنِسَاء مُّؤْمِنَاتٌ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوهُمْ أَن

تَطَؤُوهُمْ...

Had there not been believing men and believing women whom ye did not know that ye were trampling down

C4904. There were at the time in Makkah believing Muslims, men and women, and the faith of some of them was unknown to their brethren from Madinah. Had a fight taken place in Makkah, even though the Muslims

had been successful, they would unwittingly have killed some of these unknown Muslims, and thus would unwittingly have been guilty of shedding Muslim blood. This was prevented by the Treaty.

...فَتُصِيبَكُم مِّنْهُم مَّعَرَّةٌ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ لِيُدْخِلَ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاء ...

and on whose account a crime would have accrued to you without (your) knowledge. (Allah would have allowed you to force your way, but He held back your hands) that He may admit to His mercy whom He will.

C4905. Allah works according to His wise and holy Will and Plan, and not according to what seems to us, in the excitement of human life, to be the obvious course of things. By preventing a fight He saved many valuable lives, not only of Muslims but also of some who became Muslims afterwards and served Islam.

He grants His Mercy on far higher standards than man in his limited horizon can see.

لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٢٥)

If they had been apart, We should certainly have punished the Unbelievers among them with a grievous punishment.

C4906. If the party from Madinah could have distinguished Muslims from non-Muslims among the Makkans, they might have been allowed to enter and punish the pagan Quraish for their inordinate vanity and gross breach of the unwritten law of the land. But in the actual circumstances the best solution was the Treaty of Hudaybiyah.

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ ...

26. While the Unbelievers got up in their hearts heat and cant - the heat and cant of Ignorance,

C4907. While the Unbelievers were blustering and excited, and meticulously objected to introductory words such as "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful (they did not like the titles), the Prophet remained calm and collected, and got the substance of

their demands embodied in the Treaty without worrying about words.

Even though the terms of the Treaty appeared to the companions, at first, to be unfair to Muslims, they remained faithful to their Leader and showed trust in his better judgment, a trust that was vindicated by the events that followed. (R).

... فَأَنزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ ...

Allah sent down His tranquility

C4908. Cf. above 48:18, and n. 4894.

...عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى ...

to His Messenger and to the Believers, and made them stick close to the command of self-restraint;

...وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا...

and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it.

C4909. **It** = Tranquility.

Their calmness amid much provocation was a gift of Allah; they had earned a right to it by their- obedience and discipline, and showed themselves well worthy of it.

...وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٢٦)

And Allah has full knowledge of all things.

Section 4

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا بِالْحَقِّ لَتَدْخُلُنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ ...

27. Truly did Allah fulfil the vision for His Messenger:

Ye shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah wills,

C4910. The Prophet had had a dream that he had entered the Sacred Mosque at Makkah, just before he decided on the journey which resulted in the Treaty of

Hudaybiyah. By it he and his people could enter next year without the least molestation and in the full customary garb, with head shaved or hair cut short, and all the customary minor rites of pilgrimage.

...آمِنِينَ مُحَلِّقِينَ رُؤُوسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِينَ لَا تَخَافُونَ ...

- with minds secure,
- heads shaved,
- hair cut short,
- and without fear.

...فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِن دُونِ ذَٰلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا (٢٧)

For He knew what ye knew not, and He granted, besides this, a speedy victory.

C4911. See above, 48:18, and n. 4895.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ ...

28. It is He who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion:

...وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (٢٨)

and enough is Allah for a Witness.

C4912. The divine disposition of events in the coming of Islam and its promulgation by the holy Prophet are themselves evidence of the truth of Islam and its all-reaching character; for there is nothing which it has not influenced.

See also 61:9, n. 5442.

مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ...

29. Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah;

and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other.

C4913. Cf. 9:128.

The devotees of Allah wage unceasing war against evil, for themselves, and for others; but to their own brethren in faith-especially the weaker ones- they are mild and compassionate: they seek out every opportunity to sympathize with them and help them.

تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ...

Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure.

C4914. Their humility is before Allah and His Apostle and all who have authority from Allah, but they yield no power or pomp, nor do they worship worldly show or glitter. Nor is their humility before Allah a mere show for men.

سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِم مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ...

On their faces are their marks, (being) the traces of their prostration.

C4915. The traces of their earnestness and humility are engraved on their faces, i.e., penetrate their inmost being, the face being the outward sign of the inner man.

If we take it in its literal sense, the traces might mean the marks left by repeated prostration on their foreheads.

Moreover, a good man's face alone shows in him the grace and light of Allah; he is gentle, kind and forbearing, ever helpful, relying on Allah and possessing a blessed Peace and Calmness (Sakina, 48:26, 48:18 n. 4894) that can come from no other source. (R).

ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ ...

This is their similitude in the Torah;

C4916. In the Book of Moses, which is now found in a corrupt form in the Pentateuch, the posture of humility in prayer is indicated by prostration: e.g., Moses and Aaron "fell upon their faces", Num. 16:22.

...وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنجِيلِ...

and their similitude in the Gospel is:

C4917. The similitude in the Gospel is about how the good seed is sown and grows gradually, even beyond the expectation of the sower: "the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear": Mark. 4:27-28.

Thus Islam was preached by the holy Prophet;

the seed seemed to human eyes lost in the ground; but it put forth its shoot, and grew, and became strong, until it was able to stand on its own legs, and its worst enemies recognised its existence and its right to live.

Note how much more complete the parable is in the Quran. The mentality of the sowers of the seed is expressed in beautiful terms: its growth and strength filled them "with wonder and delight."

...كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ ...

like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem,

...يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ...

(filling) the sowers with wonder and delight.

As a result, it fills the Unbelievers with rage at him.

C4918. 1 construe the particle **"Ii"** as expressing not the object, but the result.

The result of the wonderful growth of Islam in numbers and strength was that its enemies were confounded, and raged furiously within their own minds, a contrast to the satisfaction, wonder, and delight of the Prophet and his Companions.

The pronoun in **"rage at them"** of course refers to the Prophet and his Companions, and goes back to the earlier-words, **"on their faces"** etc.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (٢٩)

Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds Forgiveness, and a great Reward.



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ

O ye who believe! raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Hujurat

الْحُجُرَاتِ

Introduction and Summary

This is the third of the group of three Madinah Surahs, which began with Surah 47. See the Introduction to that Surah.

Its subject matter is the manners to be observed by the members of the rapidly-growing Muslim community, among themselves and towards its Leader. The keyword "Hujurat" (Chambers) occurs in verse 4.

Its date is referred to the Year of Deputations, A.H. 9, when a large number of deputations of all kind visited Madinah to offer their allegiance to Islam.

Summary- A community must show its respect to its Leader in all forms of behaviour; quarrels are unseemly and should be composed; manners spring from morals; and mutual respect and confidence are a duty and a privilege in Islam (49:1-18, and C.223).

C.223 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Respectful behaviour to the Leader, in manner,
Voice, and demeanour, are the bonds and cement
Of an organized community. The whispers
Of rumours should be tested, and selfish impatience
Should be curbed to discipline. All quarrels
Should be composed, if necessary by the force
Of the community, but with perfect
fairness and justice. Ridicule, taunts,
And biting words, should be avoided,
In presence or in absence. Suspicion
And spying are unworthy of men who believe.
all men are descended from one pair:
their honour depends, not on race, but
on righteousness. Faith is not a matter
Of words, but of accepting Allah's Will
And striving in His cause. The coming
Into Islam confers no favours on others,
But it itself a favour and privilege,
A guidance for those who are true and sincere.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ...

1. O ye who believe!
   put not yourselves forward before Allah and His Messenger:

C4919. Several shades of meaning are implied:

- do not make yourselves conspicuous in word or deed when in the presence of Allah (e.g. in a Mosque, or at Prayers or religious assemblies):
- do not anticipate in word or deed what your Leader (Allah's Messenger) may say or do;
- do not be impatient, trying to hasten things before the time is ripe, of which the best Judge is Allah, Who speaks through His Messenger. Be reverent in all things, as in the presence of Allah: for He hears and sees all things.
- Look to the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him) for guidance and let nothing else take precedence of them. (R).

...وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١)

But fear Allah: for Allah is He who hears and knows all things.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ...

2. O ye who believe!

raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet,

C4920. It is bad manners to talk loudly before your Leader. Some ill-mannered people so raise their voices as to drown the voice of their Leader, in conversation or in Council.

...وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ...

nor speak aloud to him in talk, as ye may speak aloud to one another,

...أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (٢)

lest your deeds become vain and ye perceive not.

C4921. Such rudeness may even destroy the value of such services as they may otherwise have been able to render, and all this without their even realising the harm they were doing to the Cause.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغُضُّونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِندَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ

اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ...

3. Those that lower their voice in the presence of Allah's Messenger, their hearts has Allah tested for piety:

C4922. The essence of good manners arises from the heart. The man who really and sincerely respects his Leader has true piety in his heart, just as the man who does the opposite may undo the work of years by weakening the Leader's authority.

لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٣) ...

for them is Forgiveness and a great Reward.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِن وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤)

4. Those who shout out to thee from without the Inner Apartments most of them lack understanding.

C4923. To shout aloud to your Leader from outside his Apartments shows disrespect both for his person, his time, and his engagements. Only ignorant fools would be guilty of such unseemly behaviour. It is more seemly for them to wait and bide their time until he is free to come out and attend to them. But, with the Messenger of Allah, much is forgiven that is due to lack of knowledge and understanding.

In an earthly Court, ignorance of the Law excuseth no man. If a man behaved in that way to the General of an army or the Governor of a Province, not to speak of an earthly King, he would be laid hands on by the Guard, and could never gain the access he desires.

C4923a. Al Hujurat: "the Inner Apartments" or "The Chambers."

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ

رَّحِيمٌ (٥)

5. If only they had patience until thou couldst come out to them, it would be best for them: but Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا...

6. O ye who believe!

if a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth,

C4924. All tittle-tattle or reports-especially if emanating from persons you do not know-are to be tested, and the truth ascertained. If they were believed and passed on, much harm may be done, of which you may have cause afterwards to repent heartily. Scandal or slander of all kinds is here condemned.

That about women is specially denounced: 24: 11-20; 23-26

...أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ (٦)

lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done.

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ فِيكُمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَوْ يُطِيعُكُمْ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ لَعَنِتُّمْ...

7. And know that among you is Allah's Messenger: were he, in many matters, to follow your (wishes), ye would certainly fall into misfortune:

C4925. The messenger of Allah, if he consults his friends and associates, should not be expected to follow their advice in all matters. The judgment and responsibility are his: he sees farther than the rest, and he is not swayed by personal feeling as others may be. (R).

...وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ...

but Allah has endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts,

C4926. Fortunate indeed was the generation among whom the Prophet of Allah walked in his daily life. His example was inspiring. Their inner Faith was dear to them; it was a thing to be proud of in their innermost hearts; and they loved discipline, obedience, and righteousness. No wonder all their other disadvantages were neutralized, and they went from strength to

strength. Nothing but the Grace of Allah could have brought about such a result.

...وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ...

and He has made hateful to you unbelief, wickedness, and rebellion:

...أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ (٧)

such indeed are those who walk in righteousness --

فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَنِعْمَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٨)

8. A grace and favor from Allah;
and Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

...وَإِن طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا...

9. If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel make ye peace between them:

C4927. Individual quarrels are easier to compose than group quarrels, or, in the modem world, national quarrels. But the collective community of Islam should be supreme over groups or nations. It would be expected to act justly and try to compose the quarrel, for peace is better than fighting.

But if one party is determined to be the aggressor, the whole force of the community is brought to bear on it. The essential condition of course is that there should be perfect fairness and justice and respect for the highest principles; for Islam takes account of every just and legitimate interest without separating spiritual from temporal matters.

The League of Nations failed because these essentials were absent and today the United Nations fails for the same reason. (R).

...فَإِن بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ

إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ...

but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah;

...فَإِن فَاءتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا...

but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (٩)

for Allah loves those who are fair (and just).

... إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

10. The believers are but a single Brotherhood:

C4928. The enforcement of the Muslim Brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. On it was based the Prophet's Sermon at his last pilgrimage, and Islam cannot be completely realized until this ideal is achieved.

... فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ

So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers:

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (١٠)

And fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy.

Section 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَومٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ...

11. O ye who believe!

let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former):

C4929. Mutual ridicule ceases to be fun when there is arrogance or selfishness or malice behind it. We may laugh with people, to share in the happiness of life: we

must never laugh at people in contempt or ridicule. In many things they may be better than ourselves!

...وَلَا نِسَاء مِّن نِّسَاء عَسَى أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ...

Nor let some women laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former):

...وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ...

nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames:

C4930. Defamation may consist in speaking ill of others by the spoken or written word, or in acting in such a way as to suggest a charge against some person whom we are not in a position to judge.

A cutting, biting remark or taunt of sarcasm is included in the word **lamaza**.

An offensive nickname may amount to defamation, but in any case there is no point in using offensive nicknames, or names that suggest some real or fancied defect. They ill accord with the serious purpose which Muslims should have in life. For example, even if a man is lame, it is wrong to address him as "O lame one!" It causes him pain, and it is bad manners. So in the case of the rude remark, "the black man".

...بِئْسَ الِاسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ...

Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed:

...وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (١١)

And those who do not desist are (Indeed) doing wrong.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ...

12. O ye who believe! avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin:

C4931. Most kinds of suspicion are baseless and to be avoided, and some are crimes in themselves: for they do cruel injustice to innocent men and women.

...وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا ...

and spy not on each other,

Spying, or enquiring too curiously into other people's affairs, means either idle curiosity, and is therefore futile, or suspicion carried a stage further, which almost amounts to sin.

... وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا...

nor speak ill of each other behind their backs.

Back- biting also is a brood of the same genus. It may be either futile but all the same mischievous, or it may be poisoned with malice, in which case it is a sin added to sin.

...أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا ...

Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?

C4932. No one would like even to think of such an abomination as eating the flesh of his brother. But when the brother is dead, and the flesh is carrion, abomination is added to abomination. In the same way we are asked to refrain from hurting people's feelings when they are present; how much worse is it when we say things, true or false, when they are absent!

... فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ...

Nay, ye would abhor it... But fear Allah:

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢)

for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ

لِتَعَارَفُوا...

13. O mankind!

We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other).

C4933. This is addressed to all mankind and not only to the Muslim brotherhood, though it is understood that in a perfected world the two would be synonymous. As it is, mankind is descended from one pair of parents. Their tribes, races, and nations are convenient labels by which we may know certain differing characteristics. Before Allah they are all one, and he gets most honour who is most righteous.

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (١٣)

Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you.

And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا...

14. The desert Arabs say, "We believe."

C4934. The desert Arabs were somewhat shaky in their faith. Their hearts and minds were petty, and they thought of petty things, while Islam requires the complete submission of one's being to Allah. See next verse.

Some of the failings of the desert Arabs are described in 48:11-15. But the reference here is said to be to the Banu Asad, who came to profess Islam in order to get charity during a famine.

...قُل لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِن قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ...

Say,

"Ye have no faith; but ye (only) say, 'We have submitted our wills to Allah.'

C4935. 'This is what ye ought to prove if your faith has any meaning, but ye only say it with your tongues.'

For not yet has Faith entered your hearts.

...وَإِن تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُم مِّنْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ

غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٤)

But if ye obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not belittle aught of your deeds:

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ...

15. Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger,

...ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah:

...أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (١٥)

Such are the sincere ones.

قُلْ أَتُعَلِّمُونَ اللَّهَ بِدِينِكُمْ...

16. Say:

"What! Will ye instruct Allah about your Religion?"

C4936. 'You say (or perhaps even think) that you are Muslims, but where are the fruits of your Faith? Allah knows the innermost motives and secrets of your heart, and you cannot deceive Him by attaching a certain label to yourselves'. Alas! that this answer to the desert Arabs is true of so many others in our own times!

...وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١٦)

but Allah knows all that is in the heavens and on earth:

He has full knowledge of all things.

يَمُنُّونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا...

17. They impress on thee as favor that they have embraced Islam.

C4937. Islam in itself is a precious privilege. By accepting it we confer no favour on its preacher or on

any community. If the acceptance is from the heart, it is a great favour done to those who accept, that the Light of Allah has entered their hearts and they have received guidance.

...قُل لَّا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُم...

Say,

"Count not your Islam as a favor upon me:

...بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٧)

Nay,

Allah has conferred a favor upon you that He has guided you to the Faith, if ye be true and sincere.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

18. "Verily Allah knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth:

C4938. This does not mean that we should seek petty motives in newcomers into the House of Islam, That would indeed be habouring suspicions or allowing curiosity to spy out motives, which would be a crime under 49:12. We should be true, sincere, and devoted ourselves, and leave the case of others to Allah, from Whose eyes nothing is hidden.

...وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٨)

and Allah sees well all that ye do."

The Absolute Reality

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ

It was We who created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him:

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Qaf

ق

Introduction and Summary

We now come to group of seven Makkan Surahs (50-56), dealing with Allah's revelation through nature, through history, and through the mouths of the Prophets, and pointing to the Hereafter. We saw that the last group of three (47-49) dealt with the external and internal relations of the Ummah when formed. In the present group our attention is more particularly directed to aspect eschatological-the Future before us when this life is done.

This particular Surah belongs to the early Makkan period. After an appeal to nature and to the fate of wicked peoples in history, it removes as it were the will (verse 22) from the Future after death.

Summary- Skeptics can look up the heavens above and to Nature around them, as well as the fate of sin in the history of past: will they doubt Allah's Revelation when the veil is lifted? (59:1-29, and C. 224).

A vision of the Day of Recompense and the Day of Reality (50:30-45, and C. 225).

C.224 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(50:1-29)

The prophet's credentials are the Revelation
He brings. Let them not wonder at the Message
Or at the News of the Hereafter. They have but
To look at the starry heavens and at Nature
Around them to see Allah's goodness and His power
To bring life out of the dead, and to punish
All wrong. Every deed, word, and thought are in
The eternal Record. Death will open
Your eyes and make you see Realities.
Then will every action bear
Its due fruit, and no soul can shift
Its responsibility on to another.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ق ...

1. Qaf.

C4939. This is an Abbreviated Letter. For Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix I.

This particular Abbreviated Letter **Qaf** occurs only here as a single letter, and in combination at the beginning of Surah 42, where I was unable to explain the full combination.

Here the **Qaf** is taken by several Commentators to represent Qudiyah al amr, "the matter has been," with reference to the eschatological trend of the Surah. Allah knows best.

... وَالْقُرْآنِ الْمَجِيدِ (١)

By the Glorious Qur'án (Thou art Allah's Messenger).

C4940. Majid (translated "Glorious") is one of the beautiful appellations of the Quran.

Its glory is that of the rising sun: the more it rises on your mental and spiritual horizon, the more you are lost in admiration of its glory.

Its meanings are manifest and inexhaustible. The greater your experience, the more light is your spiritual eye able to bear.

And in that glory is a beauty that none can tell who has not experienced it in his soul. It is in itself the proof of the mission of the Holy Prophet.

... بَلْ عَجِبُوا

2. But they wonder ...

C4941. In a sense their wonder is natural: do we wonder at the glorious sun? In another sense it is unnatural: what should we say of a man who fails to see in broad daylight?

... أن جَاءهُمْ مُنذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا شَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ (٢)

that there has come to them a Warner from among themselves. So the Unbelievers say:

"This is a wonderful thing!

... أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا

3. "What! when we die and become dust, (shall we live again?).

C4942. Cf. 37:16.

... ذَلِكَ رَجْعٌ بَعِيدٌ (٣)

That is a (sort of) Return far (from our understanding)."

... قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنقُصُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ

4. We already know how much of them the earth takes away:

C4943. The earth only corrupts and takes away the body when they are dead; it has no power over the soul. The full account of the soul's doings is in Allah's Record.

... وَعِندَنَا كِتَابٌ حَفِيظٌ (٤)

with Us is a Record guarding (the full account).

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي أَمْرٍ مَّرِيجٍ (٥)

5. But they deny the truth when it comes to them:

So they are in a confused state.

C4944. If they deny what has been made clear to them, their minds must necessarily get into confusion.

All nature declares the glory and goodness of Allah. Revelation explains the inequalities of this life and how they will be redressed in the Hereafter. If they do not accept this, they are not in a logical position. They cannot reconcile the known with the unknown.

أَفَلَمْ يَنظُرُوا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ...

6. Do they not look at the sky above them?

...فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَاهَا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِن فُرُوجٍ (٦)

How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it?

C4945. The greatest philosophers have found a difficulty in understanding the skeptical position when they contemplate the wonder and mystery of the skies with all the countless beautiful stars and planets and light in them, and laws of order, motion, and symmetry, that respond to the highest mathematical abstractions without a flaw. Can blind Chance give rise to such conditions?

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ ...

7. And the earth-We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm,

C4946. Cf. 13:3; and 15:19 and n. 1955.

The earth is round, and yet it appears stretched out as a vast expanse, like a carpet kept steady with the weight of the mountains.

... وَأَنبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ (٧)

and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs) --

C4947. Cf. 22:5, and n. 2777.

Sex in plants may be hinted at: see n. 1804 to 13:3.

تَبْصِرَةً وَذِكْرَى لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيبٍ (٨)

8. To be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning (to Allah).

C4948. For all these things go into his very heart and soul. He loves to contemplate them, to remember them for himself as evidence of Allah's goodness and glory, and to mention and proclaim them, in the form of Psalm, Hymns, or Dikrs. (R).

وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً مُّبَارَكًا فَأَنبَتْنَا بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ وَحَبَّ الْحَصِيدِ (٩)

9. And We send down from the sky Rain charged with blessing, and We produce therewith Gardens and Grain for harvests;

وَالنَّخْلَ بَاسِقَاتٍ لَّهَا طَلْعٌ نَّضِيدٌ (١٠)

10. And tall (and stately) palm-trees, with shoots of fruit-stalks, piled one over another --

C4949. A beautiful nature passage. How graphic and unforgettable to any one who has seen a spring and summer in an Arabian oasis!

رِزْقًا لِّلْعِبَادِ وَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا كَذَٰلِكَ الْخُرُوجُ (١١)

11. As sustenance for (Allah's) Servants; and We give (new) life therewith to land that is dead: Thus will be the Resurrection.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَأَصْحَابُ الرَّسِّ وَثَمُودُ (١٢)

12. Before them was denied (the Hereafter) by

the people of Noah,

the Companions of the Rass,

the Thamud,

C4950. Just the names of the peoples of Arabian tradition who were punished for their sins are mentioned; their stories will be found elsewhere.

For the People of Noah, see 11:25-48 and other passages.

For the Companions of the Rass, see 25:38 and n. 3094;

وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ وَإِخْوَانُ لُوطٍ (١٣)

13. The 'Ad,

Pharaoh,

the Brethren of Lut,

for the 'Ad and the Thamud, see 26:123-158, and other passages;

for Pharaoh and his People, see 2:49-50 and other passages;

for the Brethren of Lut, see 7:80-84, and other passages;

وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ وَقَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ...

14. The companions of the Wood,

and the people of Tubba;

for the Companions of the Wood, see 15:78-79, and n. 2000;

and for the People of Tubba', see 44:37 and n. 4715.

... كُلٌّ كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ وَعِيدِ (١٤)

each one (of them) rejected the messengers, and My warning was duly fulfilled (in them).

أَفَعَيِينَا بِالْخَلْقِ الْأَوَّلِ بَلْ هُمْ فِي لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (١٥)

15. Were We then weary with the first Creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new Creation?

C4951. Cf. 46:33, and n. 4812.

Section 2

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ ...

16. It was We who created man and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him:

C4952. Allah created man, and gave him his limited free-will. Allah knows the inmost desires and motives of man even better than man does himself. He is nearer to a man than the man's own jugular vein.

The jugular vein is the big trunk vein, one on each side of the neck, which brings the blood back from the head to the heart. The two jugular veins correspond to the two carotid arteries which carry the blood from the heart to the head.

... وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ (١٦)

for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.

As the blood-stream is the vehicle of life and consciousness, the phrase **"nearer than the jugular vein"** implies that Allah knows more truly the innermost state of our feeling and consciousness than does our own ego.

إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ ...

17. Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) learn (and note them),

C4953. Two angels are constantly by him to note his thoughts, words, and actions.

... عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ (١٧)

one sitting on the right and one on the left.

One sits on the right side and notes his good deeds and the other on the left, to note his bad deeds; corresponding to the Companions of the Right and the Companions of the Left mentioned in 56:27 and 41. (R).

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِن قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ (١٨)

18. Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it).

C4954. Then each **"word"** spoken is taken down by a **guardian (raqib)**.

This has been construed to mean that the guardian only records words, not thoughts which are not uttered.

Thoughts may be forgiven if not uttered, and still more if they do not issue in action. At the stage at which we clothe a thought in words, we have already done an action.

The Recorders mentioned in the last verse make a complete Record, in order to supply motives and springs of action, which will affect the degrees or status in the Hereafter.

The three together, individuals or kinds, make the honourable Recorders, **Kiraman Katibin,** (plural, not dual number) mentioned in 82:11.

وَجَاءتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ...

19. And the stupor of death will bring truth (before his eyes):

C4955. What is **stupor** or unconsciousness to this probationary life will be the opening of the eyes to the next world: for Death is the Gateway between the two. Once through that Gateway man will realise how the things which he neglected or looked upon as remote are the intimate Realities, and the things which seemed to loom large in his eyes in this world were shadows that have fled. The things he wanted to avoid are the things that have really come to pass. Both Good and Evil will realise the Truth now in its intensity.

... ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ (١٩)

"This was the thing which thou wast trying to escape!"

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ ...

20. And the Trumpet shall be blown:

C4956. The next stage will be the Judgment, heralded with the blowing of the Trumpet. Every soul will then come forth.

... ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيدِ (٢٠)

that will be the Day whereof warning (had been given).

وَجَاءتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ...

21. And there will come forth every soul:

... مَّعَهَا سَائِقٌ وَشَهِيدٌ (٢١)

with each will be an (angel) to drive, and an (angel) to bear witness.

C4957. Several interpretations are possible, leading to the same truth, that the Judgment will be set up; the Record will be produced; the good and bad deeds will speak for and against; and complete justice will be done, each act leading to its own due fruit.

- The (angel) to drive and the (angel) to bear witness may be the Recording Angels of the left and the right (verse 17); or
- it may not be angels, but the evil deeds will drive like task-masters, and the good deeds will bear witness for the soul on trial; or
- his misused limbs and faculties will drive him to his doom, while his well-used limbs and faculties will witness for him.

لَقَدْ كُنتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ ...

22. (It will be said:) "Thou wast heedless of this;

... مِّنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنكَ غِطَاءكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ (٢٢)

now have We removed thy veil, and sharp is thy sight this Day!"

C4958. The clearness of vision will now be even greater:

see n. 4955 above.

وَقَالَ قَرِينُهُ هَذَا مَا لَدَيَّ عَتِيدٌ (٢٣)

23. And his companion will say: "Here is (his record) ready with me!"

C4959. Qarin: Companion.

If we take No. 1 of the constructions suggested in n. 4957, the Companion will be one of the Recording Angels mentioned above, in verse 21, perhaps the one that drives; or perhaps the third one mentioned in verse 18, for he has the Record ready with him.

If we take any of the other constructions mentioned in n. 4957, it will be the evil deeds or the misused faculties.

In any case it will be the factors on whose testimony his conviction will be based.

أَلْقِيَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ (٢٤)

24. (The sentence will be:)

"Throw, throw into Hell every contumacious Rejecter (of Allah)!
--

C4960. The original for **"throw"**, here and in verse 26 below, is in the dual number, which some Commentators explain by saying that the dual form is used for emphasis, as if the verb **("throw, throw")** were twice repeated. Examples of this are found in Arabic.

But is it possible that the dual refers to the two angels mentioned in verses 17 and 21? In that case the Companion in verse 27 will be the third one mentioned in verses 18 and 23.

In any case the third one will be the one on whose Record the sentence will be passed.

مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ مُّرِيبٍ (٢٥)

25. "Who forbade what was good, transgressed all bounds, cast doubts and suspicions;

الَّذِي جَعَلَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ فَأَلْقِيَاهُ فِي الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيدِ (٢٦)

26. "Who set up another god besides Allah: throw him into a severe Penalty."

قَالَ قَرِينُهُ ...

27. His companion will say:

C4961. See last note.

But some people understand by **"Companion"** here an evil associate in the world, an evil one who misled.

... رَبَّنَا ...

"Our Lord!

C4962. Our Lord. One man speaks: "I did not", etc. Yet he uses the plural pronoun in saying, -Our Lord". This is beautifully appropriate, as he is speaking so as to include the person to be judged: as if he were to

say. "Thou art my Lord, or the Lord of us angels or of all Creation, but Thou art his Lord also, for Thou didst cherish him and warn him, and he owed duties to Thee."

... مَا أَطْغَيْتُهُ وَلَكِن كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ (٢٧)

I did not make him transgress, but he was (himself) far astray."

C4963. Neither the Recording Angels nor the misused limbs and faculties, nor anything else whatever was responsible for the Evil: it was the personal responsibility of the Doer himself, with his free-will.

... قَالَ لَا تَخْتَصِمُوا لَدَيَّ

28. He will say:

"Dispute not with each other in My Presence:

C4964. It is suggested that sinners whose Record is black, driven into a comer, accuse others of misleading them: the others may be the Recorders, or their faculties or opportunities or surroundings or their associates in the world, or anything but themselves. Such recriminations are not allowed in the Court of Judgment.

... وَقَدْ قَدَّمْتُ إِلَيْكُم بِالْوَعِيدِ (٢٨)

I had already in advance sent you Warning.

C4965. Besides, personal responsibility had already been clearly preached to them in Allah's Message, and they had been warned of the consequences.

"You" is in the plural number: 'all of you who are before the Judgment-Seat had clear warning of the consequences of your conduct.'

مَا يُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ (٢٩)

29. "The Word changes not before Me, and I do not the least injustice to My Servants."

C4966. "'Abd" has two plurals:

- 'Abid, as here, means all Servants of Allah, i.e., all his creatures;

- 'Ibad has the further connotation of Servants of Allah, devoted to his service; I have translated it in many cases by the word "devotees".

The Sentence before the Judgment-Seat is pronounced with perfect justice; it does not change, and requires no change; the inevitable consequences of sin must follow; the time for Mercy is past.

C.225 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(50:30-45)

As Goodness has possibilities unlimited,

So has Evil in the opposite direction.

To those who bring a heart unsullied

And to Allah devoted, will be Peace,

Security, and Eternal Life-the Rays

From Allah's own Presence. Adore ye Allah

And pay no heed to worshipers of Doubt

And Evil: these must vanish at Judgement,

When Truth and Justice reign supreme.

Section 3

يَوْمَ نَقُولُ لِجَهَنَّمَ هَلِ امْتَلَأْتِ ...

30. One Day We will ask Hell,
"art thou filled to the full?"

C4967. As the capacity of Reward is unlimited, so is the capacity of Punishment- unlimited. Hell is personified and asked, **"Art thou sated to the full?"**

... وَتَقُولُ هَلْ مِن مَّزِيدٍ (٣٠)

It will say, "are there any more (to come)?"

It replies, **"If there are more to come, let them come."** It is not satisfied.

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ (٣١)

31. And the Garden will be brought nigh to the righteous -- no more a thing distant.

C4968. In this life, the ideas of the spirit, the accomplishment of the things in our hearts and our hopes, seem to be ever so far, seem even to recede as we think we come nearer. Not so in the Hereafter. The fruits of righteousness will no longer be in the distance. They will be realized. They will seem themselves to approach the Righteous.

هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِكُلِّ أَوَّابٍ حَفِيظٍ (٣٢)

32. (A voice will say:)

"This is what was promised for you, for everyone who turned (to Allah) in sincere repentance, who kept (his law).

C4969. The description of the Righteous is given in four masterly clauses:

1. those who turned away from Evil in sincere repentance;
2. those whose new life was good and righteous;
3. those who in their innermost hearts and in their most secret doings were actuated by Allah-fearing love, the fear that is akin to love in remembering Allah under His title of "Most Gracious"; and
4. who gave up their whole heart and being to Him.

مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ بِالْغَيْبِ ...

33. "Who feared (Allah) Most Gracious unseen,

C4970. Cf. 36:11 and n. 3952; and 35:18, and n. 3902.

... وَجَاء بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيبٍ (٣٣)

and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him):

ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ ...

34. "Enter ye therein in Peace and Security;

C4971. The true meaning of **Islam:** peace, security, salutation, and accord with Allah's Plan in all Eternity.

... ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُودِ (٣٤)

this is a Day of Eternal Life!"

لَهُم مَّا يَشَاؤُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ (٣٥)

35. There will be for them therein all that they wish, and more besides in Our Presence.

C4972. To get all that our purified wishes and desires comprehend may seem to sum up final Bliss; but there is something still wanting, which is supplied by the sight of Allah, the Light of His Countenance.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْنٍ هُمْ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُم بَطْشًا...

36. But how many generations before them did We destroy (for their Sins), stronger in power than they?

C4973. While virtue and righteousness will accomplish their final goal, what will be the End of Sin?

Let the past tell its story. Many powerful and arrogant generations were swept away, to stray in the paths of misery, without any way of escape from the consequences of their sin. This was already seen in the life of this world. In the world to come, it will be worse, as already stated in verses 24-26 above.

...فَنَقَّبُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ هَلْ مِن مَّحِيصٍ (٣٦)

Then did they wander through the land: Was there any place of escape (for them)?

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَذِكْرَىٰ لِمَن كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ (٣٧)

37. Verily in this is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth).

C4974. As Christ said (Matt. 11:15), "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear".

These are matters of high moment. Many spiritual lessons can be learnt from these things by any one who has the heart and understanding to apply to Allah's teaching and can give genuine thought to what he sees, as a witness does who has to swear to the facts on his oath.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ...

38. We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in Six Days,

C4975. Allah's creation of the heavens and the earth in long stages or periods of time, as we count time, shows how things evolve in their own good time. We must therefore be patient if Good does not seem to come to its own according to our ideas. Our will should merge itself in Allah's Will, and we should praise Him, realising that He is All- Good, and that all adjustments will be in the Hereafter.

C4976. Cf. 7:54, n. 1031; and 41:12. n. 4477.

... وَمَا مَسَّنَا مِن لُّغُوبٍ (٣٨)

nor did any sense of weariness touch Us.

C4977. Cf. 35:35.

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوبِ (٣٩)

39. Bear, then with patience, all that they say, and celebrate the praises of thy Lord, before the rising of the sun and before (its) setting,

C4978. Allah should be remembered at all times. But the best time for individual adoration is:

- early in the morning before sunrise,
- late in the day before sunset, and
- a portion of the night, when there is stillness in the air, and man's spirit loves to commune with things spiritual.

Those who would connect this with the five canonical prayers, instituted at a later stage in Madinah, would take:

- the Fair for the prayer before sunrise,
- the Zuhr and, the Asr for the afternoon prayers before sunset and
- the Magrib and the Ishaa for the night prayers.

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَأَدْبَارَ السُّجُودِ (٤٠)

40. And during part of the night, (also,) celebrate His praises, and (so likewise) after the postures of adoration.

C4979. The general meaning of **"after the postures of adoration"** would be the contemplation and remembrance of Allah after prayers.

Those who would connect this passage with the five canonical prayers understand these further prayers "following the **sujud** or prostration to mean the extra or supernumerary prayers known as **nafl**, also the use of the Rosary or the fingers in remembering the Names of Allah.

وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِ الْمُنَادِ مِن مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ (٤١)

41. And listen for the Day when the Caller will call out from a place quite near --

C4980. The Day of Resurrection, when the Call to the souls to arise and come to the Judgment-Seat will be immediately answered, and they will all arise and come forth.

Cf. 36:49-53, and notes 3997 and 3999.

C4981. In the life of this world it seemed all so remote. In the new life at the Resurrection it will all be so near; for there will be neither time nor space as we know them here.

يَوْمَ يَسْمَعُونَ الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ ...

42. The day when they will hear a (mighty) Blast in (very) truth:

C4982. The word **"Al Sayhatun"** (mighty Blast) is used for the Resurrection (as here) or for the sudden punishment of the guilty on this earth, as in 11:67, where see further references.

... ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُرُوجِ (٤٢)

that will be the day of Resurrection.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي وَنُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْنَا الْمَصِيرُ (٤٣)

43. Verily it is We Who give Life and Death; and to Us is the Final Goal --

يَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ الْأَرْضُ عَنْهُمْ سِرَاعًا ذَٰلِكَ حَشْرٌ ...

44. The Day when the Earth will be rent asunder, from (men) hurrying out: that will be a gathering together --

C4983. Men will hurry out from all corners of the earth to answer the call, and the earth itself will be rent asunder.

In 25:25 the imagery used was the heaven being rent asunder, and angels coming out in ranks: see n. 3082. Cf. also 84:1-4.

... عَلَيْنَا يَسِيرٌ (٤٤)

quite easy for Us.

C4984. It may seem to our material imaginations a difficult task to collect together the souls of all sorts of men, who died in all sorts of conditions at different times, but it will be a different kind of world and creation altogether, and to Allah all things are not only possible but easy.

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِجَبَّارٍ...

45. We know best what they say; and thou art not one to overawe them by force.

C4985. People may throw all sorts of doubts about the Judgment and the Hereafter. The Prophet's task is not to force them to accept anything. His task is to deliver the Message of the Quran, and admonish those who are spiritually fit and ready to receive admonition and to prepare themselves for the new and higher life destined for man.

...فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مَن يَخَافُ وَعِيدِ (٤٥)

So admonish with the Qur'án such as fear My Warning!

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I (Allâh) created not the jinns and humans except they should worship Me (Alone).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Dhariyat

الذّاريات

Introduction and Summary

This is an early Makkan Surah, the second of the seven Surahs forming a group dealing with revelation and the Hereafter. See introduction to Surah 50. this Surah deals with the varying ways in which Truth prevails irresistibly even against all human probabilities. (R).

Summary- The winds may blow and scatter, lift and rash, or divide in all directions; but the Truth and Promise of Allah are sure and stable, whereof you may see Signs both around and within you (51;1-23 and C. 226).

Past events and what you see before you point to the unfailing consequences of all you do: Allah, of His Grace, sends you a Reminder: the loss is your own if you reject and deny (51:24-60, and C. 227).

C.226 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(51:1-23)

Various are the ways of working we see

In Allah's world-strong and gentle, scattering

And uniting: through it all runs a Purpose

True and stable, which we all shall see fulfilled

On the Day of Judgement and Justice, which

Must inevitably come to pass: give up

False doctrines, which agree not among themselves

Or with facts. For evil must end in evil,

And good in joy and felicity. The good

Worship Allah and serve Allah's creature:

Those needing help are ever in their thoughts.

They see Signs of Allah in all things in heaven

And earth, and in their own hearts and minds.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالذَّارِيَاتِ ...

1. By the (Winds) ...

C4986. Four things are mentioned in verses I to 4 as evidences or types of the certainty and unity of a Truth described in verses 5-6.

What these things are is described by certain adjectival participles, the noun understood being usually taken to be "Winds": the word for Wind (Rih) being feminine in Arabic.

Some Commentators however understand other nouns as being implied. e.g., angels in all four verses, or different things in each of the four verses.

Whatever these things are, their different modes of working are evidence of the power and goodness of Allah, the Unity of His Plan, and the certainty of Good and Evil reaching their own destined ends, when Judgment and Justice will have given each one his due. (R).

ذَرْوًا (١) ...

... that scatter broadcast;

C4987. Winds may blow strong, and scatter particles of dust far and wide; but they do not diminish by one jot the substance of Allah's material creation; on the contrary they help to readjust things.

They reshape the configuration of the earth; in the vegetable kingdom they carry seeds about and plant new seeds in old soils; in the region of air they produce mighty changes in temperature and pressure that affect animal and vegetable life; they carry the moisture of equatorial Africa to the parched plains of India; and so on.

Yet they are just one little agency showing Allah's working in the material world. So in the spiritual world. Revelation works mighty changes; it may be resisted, but the resistance will be swept away; it ever points to the one Great Final Event, "to which the whole Creation moves".

فَالْحَامِلَاتِ وِقْرًا (٢)

2. And those that lift and bear away heavy weights;

C4988. The things that lift and bear away heavy weights may be the Winds that carry the heavy rain-clouds or that sweep off every resistance from their path, or it

may be the heavy moisture-laden clouds themselves. So works Revelation: it lifts and sweeps away the burdens of custom, superstition, or man's inertia, and ever leads onwards to the destined End.

فَالْجَارِيَاتِ يُسْرًا (٣)

3. And those that flow with ease and gentleness;

C4989. These may be Winds that fill the sails of ships with gentle and favourable breezes, that carry men and merchandise to their destinations. Or they may be the ships themselves, whose smooth motion through the waters is described in many places, by the verb **jara, "to flow"**, e.g., cf. 2:164.

فَالْمُقَسِّمَاتِ أَمْرًا (٤)

4. And those that distribute and apportion by command --

C4990. These may be Winds (or other agencies) that distribute and apportion moisture or rain or atmospheric pressure or other blessings of Allah, -not haphazard but by fixed laws, i.e., according to the Command of their Lord. So with Revelation. Its blessings are distributed all round, and it produces its marvelous effects sometimes in the most unlikely places and ways.

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ (٥)

5. Verily that which ye are promised is true;

C4991. That which ye are promised: the Promise of Allah about Mercy and Forgiveness to the Penitent, and Justice and Penalty to the Rebellious, the promise of the Hereafter: the promise that all does not end here, but that there is a truer and more lasting world to come, for which this is but a preparation.

وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٦)

6. And verily Judgment and Justice must indeed come to pass.

C4992. Din: the giving to each person his precise and just due; this is implied in Judgment and Justice. All the inequalities of this Life are to be redressed.

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ (٧)

7. By the Sky with (its) numerous Paths,

C4993. The study of the numerous regular orbits of the planets and irregularly regular orbits of comets, and the various motions, visible or invisible, of the fixed stars or revolving stars, form in themselves a network of knowledge or science, of a highly technical nature; the highest astronomy or mathematics can only barely reach its fringe.

But these have all a fixed Plan and Purpose under Allah's Dispensation. In them variety leads to Unity. In contrast look at the confused medley of doctrines, views, and dicta put forward by the Skeptics, as described in the next verse.

إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ (٨)

8. Truly ye are in a doctrine discordant,

C4994. Qaul = saying, word, theory, doctrine.

Mukhtalif = differing, various, inconsistent with itself, discordant.

No theory or doctrine based on a denial of a Hereafter can be consistent with spiritual facts as we know them, or with Allah's Goodness, Justice, and Mercy.

يُؤْفَكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ أُفِكَ (٩)

9. Through which are deluded (away from the Truth) such as would be deluded.

C4995. Some Commentators draw from this a rigid doctrine of Calvinistic Predestination or Determinism, which I do not think is fairly deducible from the words. **"Ufika"** should I think be translated **"will be or would be deluded",** meaning "have the wish or desire to be", and not "must necessarily be deluded by eternal predestination".

The word occurs in many places in the Quran: e.g. Cf. 5:78, or 9:30.

قُتِلَ الْخَرَّاصُونَ (١٠)

10. Woe to the falsehood-mongers --

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُونَ (١١)

11. Those who (flounder) heedless in a flood of confusion:

C4996. They are in great spiritual danger: yet they care not.

يَسْأَلُونَ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٢)

12. They ask,

"when will be the Day of Judgment and Justice?"

يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُونَ (١٣)

13. (It will be) a Day when they will be tried (and tested) over the Fire!

ذُوقُوا فِتْنَتَكُمْ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنتُم بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (١٤)

14. "Taste ye your trial! this is what ye used to ask to be hastened!"

C4997. They used to say scoffingly, "if there is to be punishment for our sins, let it come at once!"

When it comes, they will know what a terrible thing it is! Cf. 26:204, n. 3230.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (١٥)

15. As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs,

C4998. Gardens and Springs are the two most frequent examples for the highest satisfaction and bliss.

آخِذِينَ مَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ

16. Taking joy in the things which their Lord gives them,

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُحْسِنِينَ (١٦)

because, before then, they lived a good life.

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ (١٧)

17. They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night,

C4999. They were engaged most of the night in worship and in the planning of good deeds. They preferred activity to idleness, the service of Allah and His creatures to the indulgence of Self.

وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ (١٨)

18. And in the hours of early dawn, They (were found) praying for Forgiveness;

C5000. They were up early before dawn, ready for their devotions.

The praying for Forgiveness and Mercy does not necessarily imply that they had committed fresh sins, Indeed they began the day with such devotions, showing their great humility before Allah and their anxious care for others, for whom they prayed as much as for themselves.

See the last sentence of n. 21 to 1:5.

وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (١٩)

19. And in their wealth and possessions (was remembered) the right of the (needy), him who asked, and him who (for some reason) was prevented (from asking).

C5001. True charity remembers not only those in need who ask, but also those who are prevented by some reason from asking. The man of true charity seeks out the latter. There may be various reasons which prevent a man from asking for help:

- he may be ashamed to ask, or his sense of honour may prevent him from asking;
- he may be so engrossed in some great ideal that he may not think of asking;
- he may even not know that he is in need,
- he may not know that you possess the things that can supply his needs; and

- he may be a dumb and helpless creature, whether a human being or a dumb animal, or any creature within your ken or power.

Charity in the higher sense includes all help, from one better endowed to one less well endowed.

Cf. n. 179 to 2:177; also 2:273-274, and notes 322 and 323.

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُوقِنِينَ (٢٠)

20. On the earth are Signs for those of assured Faith,

وَفِي أَنفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٢١)

21. As also in your own selves: will ye not then see?

C5002. The Signs and Evidence of Allah are in all nature and within the body and soul of man, if man has but the spiritual eyes to see.

Cf. 41:53.

وَفِي السَّمَاءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ (٢٢)

22. And in heaven is your Sustenance, as ((also) that which ye are promised.

C5003. "Sustenance", here as elsewhere, includes physical sustenance, as well as spiritual sustenance. Similarly heaven or sky has both the physical and the spiritual meaning.

The physical sustenance grows from rain from the sky; the spiritual sustenance comes from divine aid, grace, and mercy, and includes the Good News and the Warning which come from Revelation about the Hereafter.

فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنَّكُمْ تَنطِقُونَ (٢٣)

23. Then, by the Lord of heaven and earth, this is the very Truth, as much as the fact that ye can speak intelligently to each other.

C5004. Attention having been called to the Signs or Evidences of Allah's working on the earth, within ourselves, and in the heavens, in verses 20-22, an

appeal is made to our own inner conscience, in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth, to acknowledge and act up to the truth of Revelation, and turn to the spiritual Realities. For they are as real as our own conscious and self-intelligent existence, on which is based all our knowledge.

As a philosopher (Descartes) has said: "I think; therefore I am."

C.227 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(51:24-60)

Even Abraham the True had need to be told

Before he could realize the purpose of Allah.

Clear Signs were sent for warning, as, of old,

To Pharaoh, the 'Ad, the Thamud, and the people

Of Noah, and the warning inevitably came

To pass. Our Signs are for your instruction

Heed them and learn by them. Those who believe

Find profit in their lives; those who reject

Or deny-alas! they learn not from the past.

Woe unto them! The loss is their own!

Section 2

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ (٢٤)

24. Has the story reached thee, of the honored guests of Abraham?

C5005. Cf. 9:69-73 and notes, where further details of the story will be found.

Cf. also 15:51-56.

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا...

25. Behold, they entered His presence, and said: "Peace!"

C5006. They were angels, who appeared suddenly before him at his tent-door in the guise of men, and saluted him with the salutation of peace. He returned the salutation, but felt, from their appearance and their manner, that they were unusual, not ordinary, strangers.

...قَالَ سَلَامٌ...

He said, "Peace!"

...قَوْمٌ مُّنكَرُونَ (٢٥)

(and thought, "these seem) unusual people."

C5007. Munkar: unknown, uncommon, unusual, not customary, (hence by derived meaning, not applicable here, not fair or just);

opposite in both primary and secondary meanings to maraf, well-known, usual, customary, just. Cf. 15:62.

فَرَاغَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ فَجَاء بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ (٢٦)

26. Then he turned quickly to his household, brought out a fatted calf.

C5008. They seemed unusual strangers, but he said nothing and quietly proceeded to perform the rites of hospitality. He brought a roast fatted calf and placed it before them to eat. But the strangers did not eat (11:70).

This disconcerted him. According to the laws of hospitality, a stranger under your roof is under your protection, but if he refuses to eat, he refuses your hospitality and keeps himself free from any ties of guest and host.

"What were their designs?" thought Abraham, and he felt some distrust. But they were angels and could not cat. They declared themselves, and announced the birth to Abraham of a son endowed with wisdom,-in other words that Abraham was to be the head of a long line of Prophets! (15:53).

فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٢٧)

27. And placed it before them...He said, "Will ye not eat?"

فَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً...

28. (When they did not eat), He conceived a fear of them.

...قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَبَشَّرُوهُ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ (٢٨)

They said, "Fear not,"

and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge.

فَأَقْبَلَتِ امْرَأَتُهُ فِي صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَجُوزٌ عَقِيمٌ (٢٩)

29. But his wife came forward (laughing) aloud: she smote her forehead and said:

"a barren old woman!"

C5009. Abraham's wife Sarah was old and barren. This news seemed to her too good to be true. She came forward, clamoured (11:71), struck her forehead with her hands, indicative of her amusement and incredulity as "a barren old woman": 11:72.

قَالُوا كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكِ...

30. They said, "Even so has thy Lord spoken:

C5010. The angels said:

"What may sound improbable to human beings will yet come to pass if Allah commands. And Allah thy Lord has spoken. So shall it be. For all His promises are full of wisdom and knowledge."

So the angels on that occasion. But the application is for all time and to all human affairs. Never despair. However much Truth may be in the shade, it will shine with full splendour. And the Judgment will come, when good will come to its own!

إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ (٣٠)

and He is full of Wisdom and Knowledge."

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٣١)

31. (Abraham) said: "And what, o ye Messengers, is your errand (now)?"

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣٢)

32. They said,
"We have been sent to a people (deep) in sin --

لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن طِينٍ (٣٣)

33. "To bring on, on them (a shower of) stones of clay (brimstone),

C5011. Cf. 11:82, and n. 1052 to 7:84.

The angels' errand of mercy to Abraham (to announce the succession of godly men in his line) was coupled with their errand of justice and punishment to the people of Lut, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were deep in the most abominable and unnatural sins.

So Allah's Mercy and Justice go hand in hand in all human affairs. Faith has nothing to fear, and wickedness has only to turn and repent, to obtain Allah's Mercy.

مُسَوَّمَةً عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ (٣٤)

34. "Marked as from thy Lord for those who trespass beyond bounds."

C5012. Cf. 11:83, and n. 1580.

Every crime has its due punishment as marked out in the decrees of Allah.

فَأَخْرَجْنَا مَن كَانَ فِيهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣٥)

35. Then We evacuated those of the Believers who were there.

C5013. The only just or righteous persons found in Sodom and Gomorrah (Cities of the Plain by the Dead Sea) were in the house of Lut, who was the Prophet sent to call them to repentance. He and his believing family and adherents were told to leave in due time, and the wicked were destroyed in a shower of brimstone.

فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (٣٦)

36. But We found not there any just (Muslim) persons except in one house:

C5014. That was the house of Lut; and even there, his wife had no faith: she disobeyed the Command and perished: 11:81, n. 1577.

وَتَرَكْنَا فِيهَا آيَةً لِّلَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ (٣٧)

37. And We left there a Signs for such as fear the Grievous Penalty.

C5015. The Grievous Chastisement: that is, the Final Judgment.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in this life is taken as the type of the Final Judgment. The vestiges can be seen-as a Sign and a Warning-in the sulphury plain round the Dead Sea: Cf. xv. 79.

وَفِي مُوسَى ...

38. And in Moses (was another Sign):

C5016. Cf. 44:17-31.

The story of Moses and Pharaoh is here just referred to. The points emphasized here are:

- that Moses had manifest authority, yet Pharaoh doubted;
- that Pharaoh's reliance was on his Chiefs and his forces, but they could not help when his doom came; and
- that in the most extraordinary and incredible ways (judged by ordinary human standards), his arrogance and his reliance on his Chiefs and forces was his undoing.

... إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٨)

Behold, We sent him to Pharaoh, with authority manifest.

فَتَوَلَّى بِرُكْنِهِ وَقَالَ سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مَجْنُونٌ (٣٩)

39. But (Pharaoh) turned back with his Chiefs, and said,
"A sorcerer, or one possessed!"

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (٤٠)

40. So We took him and his forces, and threw them into the sea: and his was the blame.

C5017. The ungodly Egyptians were all destroyed, but the chief blame lay on Pharaoh for misleading them. Pharaoh's punishment was just. He could not blame any one else. And certainly no one can blame the course of Allah's Justice, for Allah was patient, and gave him many chances to repent.

وَفِي عَادٍ ...

41. And in the 'Ad (people) (was another Sign):

C5018. Cf. 46:21-26.

The point here is that the 'Ad were a gifted people: Allah had given them talents and material wealth: but when they defied Allah, they and all their belongings were destroyed in a night, by a hurricane which they thought was bringing them the rain to which they were looking forward. How marvelously Allah's Providence works, to help the good and destroy the wicked!

... إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ (٤١)

Behold, We sent against them the devastating Wind:

مَا تَذَرُ مِن شَيْءٍ أَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيمِ (٤٢)

42. It left nothing whatever that it came up against, but reduced it to ruin and rottenness.

وَفِي ثَمُودَ إِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَمَتَّعُوا حَتَّى حِينٍ (٤٣)

43. And in the Thamud (was another Sign):

C5019. See the story of the Thamud and their prophet Salih in 7:73-79. Here the point is the suddenness of their punishment and its unexpected nature.

Behold, they were told, "Enjoy (your brief day) for a little while!"

C5020. Salih their prophet gave them three days' clear warning for repentance (11:65). But they heeded him not. On the contrary they flouted him and continued in their evil courses.

فَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ ...

44. But they insolently defied the command of their Lord:

C5021. They had already defied the order to preserve the She-camel, which was a sign from Allah. See 11:64-65 and n. 1560.

They continued to flout the warnings of the prophet until the earthquake came on them with a stunning noise and buried them where they were: 7:78; and 11:67.

... فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَهُمْ يَنظُرُونَ (٤٤)

so the stunning noise (of an earthquake) seized them, even while they were looking on.

C5022. Saiqat. a stunning sound like that of thunder and lightning (2:55);

such a sound often accompanies an earthquake (see 41:17, n. 4485, and 7:78 and n. 1047).

فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مِن قِيَامٍ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنتَصِرِينَ (٤٥)

45. Then they could not even stand (on their feet), nor could they help themselves.

C5023. They were swept off in the earthquake.

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٤٦)

46. So were the people of Noah before them: for they wickedly transgressed.

C5024. The generation of Noah was swept away in the Flood for their sins: 7:59-64.

The point is that such a Flood seemed so unlikely to them that they thought Noah was "wandering in his mind" when he delivered Allah's Message: 7:60.

Section 3

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ (٤٧)

47. With the power and skill did We construct the Firmament: for it is We Who create the vastness of Space.

C5025. If you do not wish to go back to the wonderful things in the past, which show the power and goodness of Allah, and His justice supreme over all wrong-doing, look at the wonderful things unfolding themselves before your very eyes!

1. The space in the heavens above! Who can comprehend it but He Who made it and sustains it?
2. The globe of the earth under your feet! How great its expanse seems over sea and land, and spread out for you like a wonderful carpet or bed of rest!
3. All things are in twos:
   - sex in plants and animals, by which one individual is complementary to another;
   - in the subtle forces of nature, Day and Night, positive and negative electricity, forces of attraction and repulsion: and numerous other opposites, each fulfilling its purpose, and contribution to the working of Allah's Universe:
   - and in the moral and spiritual world,

     Love and Aversion,

     Mercy and Justice,

     Striving and Rest, and so on;

-all fulfilling their functions according to the Artistry and wonderful Purpose of Allah. Everything has its counterpart, or pair, or complement. Allah alone is One, with none like Him, or needed to complement Him.

These are noble things to contemplate. And they lead us to a true understanding of Allah's Purpose and Message.

وَالْأَرْضَ فَرَشْنَاهَا فَنِعْمَ الْمَاهِدُونَ (٤٨)

48. And We have spread out the (spacious) earth: how excellently We do spread out!

وَمِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ ...

49. And of everything We have created pairs:

C5026. See 3 in the last note.

Cf. 36:36, n. 3981.

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٩) ...

that ye may receive instruction.

فَفِرُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ ...

50. Hasten ye then (at once) to Allah:

C5027. If you understand Nature and yourselves aright, you will know that Allah is the Truth, and you will fly at once to Him. This is the teaching which the Prophet of Allah has come to give you, in clear terms and openly to all.

إِنِّي لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٥٠) ...

I am from Him a warner to you, clear and open!

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ

51. And make not another an object of worship with Allah:

C5028. Verses 50 and 51, ending with the same clause to emphasize the connection between the two, should be read together. The Prophet's mission was (and is):

- to show us the urgent need for repentance; and
- to wean us from the precipice of false worship.

The one convinces us of sin and opens the door to the Mercy of Allah; the other cures us of the madness of paying court to idle or worthless objects of desire; for in

the worship of Allah, the One True God is included the best service to ourselves and our fellow-creatures.

If fully understood, this sums up the whole duty of man: for it leads us by the right Path to the love of Allah and the love of man and of all creatures.

إِنِّي لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٥١)

I am from Him a Warner to you, clear and open!

كَذَٰلِكَ مَا أَتَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا قَالُوا سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مَجْنُونٌ (٥٢)

52. Similarly, no messenger came to the Peoples before them, but they said (of him) in like manner,

"A sorcerer, or one possessed"

C5029. They said this of Moses: 51:39.

And they said this of the holy Prophet: 38:4; 44:14.

أَتَوَاصَوْا بِهِ ...

53. Is this the legacy they have transmitted, one to another?

... بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُونَ (٥٣)

Nay, they are themselves a people transgressing beyond bounds!

C5030. There is a tradition of Evil as there is a tradition of Good. The ways of Evil in dealing with the teachers of Truth are similar in all ages, But such evil traditions would have no effect, were it not that the generation following them is itself ungodly, "transgressing beyond bounds."

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَمَا أَنتَ بِمَلُومٍ (٥٤)

54. So turn away from them: not thine is the blame.

C5031. When the Prophet freely proclaims his Message, it is not his fault if obstinate wickedness refuses to listen. He can leave them alone, but he should continue to teach for the benefit of those who have Faith.

وَذَكِّرْ فَإِنَّ الذِّكْرَى تَنفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٥)

55. But teach (thy Message): for teaching benefits the Believers.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (٥٦)

56. I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me.

C5032. Creation is not for idle sport or play: 21:16. Allah has a serious Purpose behind it, which, in our imperfect state, we can only express by saying that each creature is given the chance of development and progress towards the Goal, which is Allah. Allah is the source and centre of all power and all goodness, and our progress depends upon our putting ourselves into accord with His Will. This is His service.

It is not of any benefit to Him: see the next two verses: it is for our own benefit.

مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُم مِّن رِّزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَن يُطْعِمُونِ (٥٧)

57. No sustenance do I require of them nor do I require that they should feed Me.

C5033. Sustenance: in both the literal and the figurative sense; so also "Freed Me" at the end of the verse.

Allah is independent of all needs. It is therefore absurd to suppose that He should require any Sustenance, and still more absurd to suppose that we can feed Him! The gifts, the Sustenance, the goodness, all come from His side.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ (٥٨)

58. For Allah is He Who gives (all) Sustenance, Lord of Power, Steadfast (for ever).

C5034. Allah commands all power; therefore any power we seek must be from Him. And His power is steadfast, the same to-day as yesterday, and for ever. Therefore His help is always sure.

فَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذَنُوبًا مِّثْلَ ذَنُوبِ أَصْحَابِهِمْ ...

59. For the wrongdoers, their portion is like unto the portion of their fellows (of earlier generations):

C5035. Each generation, that acts like any of its predecessors, must meet a similar fate. If the wicked came to an evil end in the past, the same results will follow in the present and the future. The punishment will come suddenly enough: let them not in mockery ask that it should be hastened.

... فَلَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونِ (٥٩)

then let them not ask Me to hasten (that portion)!

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن يَوْمِهِمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٦٠)

60. Woe, then, to the Unbelievers, on account of that day of theirs which they have been promised!

C5036. That is, their eternal Punishment in the Hereafter, as well as any punishment that may come to them in this life.

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ

and celebrate the praises of thy Lord the while thou standest forth.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

At Tur

الطُّور

Introduction and Summary

This is the third of the group of seven Makkan Surahs described in the introduction to Surah 50.

It is, like its predecessor, an early Makkan Surah. The points here emphasized are: that Revelation is in accord with all Allah's Signs, including previous Revelation, and that the Hereafter is inevitable, and we must prepare for it.

Summary- All Signs of Allah, including previous Revelation, point to the inevitable consequences of ill-deeds and good deeds: how can people deny or ignore the Message of Revelation? (52:1-49, and C. 228).

C.228 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

By the sacred Symbols---of the Mount
Sublime, the Eternal Record on an open
Scroll, the House of Worship thronged
With men, the Canopy blue of unfathomed
Heights, and the boundless Ocean with
Its resistless tidal Swell-all acts
Of men must have their inevitable fruits.
New worlds will be born with the Day of Doom:
New values established by Allah's Decree.
Consumed will be Evil in the fire of Reality:
And Good will come to its own-in personal
And social Bliss, but most in the full
Realization that Allah is good, the Beneficent,
The Merciful...Proclaim, then the praises
Of the Lord, nor heed the slanders of Ignorance
Or Spite: for the Lord Who created will cherish;
His plan will overthrow the puny plots
Of men, Hold firm with patience in Faith
In the Hereafter, and sing His praises
Even in the busy marts of this world,
But chiefly in stillness of the Night
And the holy hour of Dawn as the Stars
Retreat, singing glory to the Maker
Of their own most glorious Sun.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالطُّورِ (١)

1. By the Mount (of Revelation);

C5037. The adjuration is by five things which we shall presently explain. An appeal is made to these five Signs in verses 1 to 6, and the certainty of future events is asserted in the most emphatic terms in verses 7 to 28, in three parts, viz.,

- the coming of judgment and the passing away of this phenomenal world (verses 7-10);
- the future ill consequences of ill-deeds done (verses 11-16);
- and future attainment of bliss and complete realisation of Allah's love and mercy (verses 17-28).

وَكِتَابٍ مَّسْطُورٍ (٢)

2. By a Decree Inscribed,

C5038. See last note.

The five Signs to which appeal is made are:

- the Mount (of Revelation), verse 1;
- the Book Inscribed, verses 2-3;
- The Much-frequented House, verse 4;
- the Canopy Raised High, verse 5; and
- the Ocean filled with Swell, verse 6.

Let us examine these in detail. Each of them has a figurative meaning.

- The Mount is the sublime world of Revelation.

  In the case of Moses it is typified by Mount Sinai: Cf. 95:2, where it is mentioned in juxtaposition to the sacred territory of Makkah, 95:3.

In the case of Jesus it is the Mount of Olives: Cf. 95:1, and also Matt. 24:3-51, where Jesus made his striking pronouncement about the Judgment to come.

In the case of Muhammad it is the Mountain of Light, where he first received the revelation: Cf. n. 11

- The **Book Inscribed** is Allah's Eternal word. When it becomes Revelation to man, it is figured forth as something **"inscribed"**, reduced to writing; and as it is made clear to the intelligence of man,

فِي رَقٍّ مَّنشُورٍ (٣)

3. In a Scroll unfolded;

it is further described as **"in a parchment unfolded"**, that is, spread out so that everyone who has the will can seek its guidance.

وَالْبَيْتِ الْمَعْمُورِ (٤)

4. By the much-frequented Fane;

C5039. See the last two notes.

- **"The much-frequented Fane"** (or House) is usually understood to mean the Ka'bah, which the holy Prophet purified and re-dedicated to true worship.

وَالسَّقْفِ الْمَرْفُوعِ (٥)

5. By the Canopy Raised High;

C5040.

- **"The Canopy Raised High"** is the canopy of heaven, to whose height or sublimity no limit can be assigned by the mind of man. It is Nature's Temple in which all Creation worships Allah - the Symbol in which the material and the visible merges into the the spiritual and the intuitional.

وَالْبَحْرِ ...

6. And by the Ocean...

C5041.

- The Ocean-the vast, limitless, all encircling Ocean. It is expressed to be **masjur**, full of a mighty swell, boiling over, poured forth all over the earth, as if overwhelming all landmarks; Cf. 81:6:-

a fitting description of the final disappearance of our temporal world in the supreme establishment of the Reality behind it.

... الْمَسْجُورِ (٦)

... filled with Swell --

C5042. This completes the five Signs by which man may know for certain of the Judgment to come.

Note that they are in a descending order; -

- the highest, or most remote from man's consciousness, being mentioned first,
- and that nearest to man's consciousness being mentioned last.
- The truth of Revelation; its embodiment in a Prophet's Message given in human language;
- the universal appeal of divine worship;
- the starry world above; and the encircling Ocean, full of life and motion below,-

all are evidences that the Day of Allah will finally come, and nothing can avert it. (R).

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٧)

7. Verily, the Doom of thy Lord will indeed come to pass --

مَا لَهُ مِن دَافِعٍ (٨)

8. There is none can avert it --

يَوْمَ تَمُورُ السَّمَاء مَوْرًا (٩)

9. On the day when the firmament will be in dreadful commotion.

C5043. The Day of Judgment is typified by two figures.

- **"The firmament will be in dreadful commotion."** The heavens as we see them suggest to us peace and tranquility, and the power of fixed laws which all the heavenly bodies obey. This will all be shaken in the rise of the new world.

  Cf. Matt. 24:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days ... the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

For (2) see next note.

وَتَسِيرُ الْجِبَالُ سَيْرًا (١٠)

10. And the mountain will fly hither and thither.

C5044.

- The mountains are a type of firmness and stability. But things that we think of as firm and stable in this material life will be shaken to pieces, and will be no more substantial than a mirage in a desert. Cf. 78:20.

فَوَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١١)

11. Then woe that Day to those that treat (truth) as Falsehood --

C5045. That Day will be a Day of Woe to the wrong doers described in two aspects, the rebels against Allah and Allah's Truth, just as it will be a Day of Joy and Thanksgiving to the Righteous, who are described in three aspects in verses 17 to 28.

The rebels are here described as being those who openly defied Truth and plunged into wrong-doing, or who trifled with truth, who jested with serious matters, who had not the courage to plunge openly into wrong-doing but who secretly took profit out of it, who wasted their life in doubts and petty quibbles.

It is difficult to say which attitude did more harm to themselves and to others. Both are aspects of deep-seated rebellion. But the mercy of Allah was open to all if they had repented and amended their lives.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي خَوْضٍ يَلْعَبُونَ (١٢)

12. That play (and paddle) in shallow trifles.

يَوْمَ يُدَعُّونَ إِلَى نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ دَعًّا (١٣)

13. That Day shall they be thrust down to the Fire of Hell, irresistibly.

هَذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِي كُنتُم بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ (١٤)

14. "This," it will be said, "is the Fire -- which ye were wont to deny!

C5046. In face of the Realities, it will be borne in on them how wrong it was for them in this life to deny or forget that every wicked thought or deed had its own retributive chain of consequences.

أَفَسِحْرٌ هَذَا ...

15. "Is this then a fake,

C5047. Perhaps they had said that the Hereafter was a fake, mere old wives' tales! If they had given serious thought to the Signs of Allah, they would have been saved from that serious spiritual blindness: then they will see that the fault was their own, and that the warnings of the messengers of Truth were nothing but pure Truth.

... أَمْ أَنتُمْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ (١٥)

or is it ye that do not see?

اصْلَوْهَا فَاصْبِرُوا أَوْ لَا تَصْبِرُوا سَوَاء عَلَيْكُمْ...

16. "Burn ye therein: the same is it to you whether ye bear it with patience, or not:

C5048. At that stage they will have no justification for anger or impatience; for their whole position will have been due to their own conduct and their rejection of Allah's Grace. Nor will there be time then for patience or repentance, for their period of probation will then have been over.

...إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٦)

Ye but receive the recompense of your (own) deeds."

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَعِيمٍ (١٧)

17. **As to the Righteous,** they will be in Gardens, and in Happiness

C5049. The Righteous will be in Bliss far beyond their merits: their sins and faults will be forgiven by the grace of Allah, which will save them from the penalties which they may have incurred from human frailty. It will be their own effort or striving which will win them Allah's grace: see verse 19 below. But the fruits will be greater than they could strictly have earned.

فَاكِهِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ وَوَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (١٨)

18. Enjoying the (Bliss) which their Lord hath bestowed on them, and their Lord shall deliver them from the Penalty of the Fire.

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا ...

19. (To them will be said:)

C5050. The bliss of the Righteous is described in three aspects:

- their individual bliss, verses 17-20:
- their social bliss, verses 21-24; and
- their satisfaction in the dissipation of past shadows, and their full understanding of the goodness of Allah, verses 25-28.

"Eat and drink ye, with profit and health,

C5051. Individual satisfaction is expressed in three types or figures of speech.

- eating and drinking,
- couches of dignity,
- the joy of individual companionship.

But the eating and drinking will be free of all drawbacks, such as excess, aftereffects and satiety: here there will be pure health, profit, and enjoyment.

So about the other two: see the notes following.

Cf. with this the description of heaven in 77:40-49: while the general account is the same, special phases are brought out in the two passages to correspond with the context.

... بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (١٩)

because of your (good) deeds."

...مُتَّكِئِينَ عَلَى سُرُرٍ مَّصْفُوفَةٍ

20. They will recline (with ease) on Thrones (of dignity) arranged in ranks;

C5052. Every one will have a couch of dignity, but it does not follow that the dignity will be the same. Every one's Personality will be purified but it will not be merged into one general sameness.

...وَزَوَّجْنَاهُم بِحُورٍ عِينٍ (٢٠)

and We shall join them to Companions, with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes.

C5053. Cf. 54:54, and notes 4728 and 4729, where the meaning of **Hur** is fully explained.

This is the special sharing of individual Bliss one with another.

The next verse refers to the general social satisfaction shared with all whom we loved in this earthly life.

...وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُم بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ

21. And those who believe and whose families follow them in Faith -- to them shall We join their families:

C5054. Durriyat. literally, progeny, offspring, family; applied by extension to mean all near and dear ones.

Love is unselfish, and works not merely, or chiefly, for Self, but for others; provided the others have Faith and respond according to their capacities or degrees, they will be joined together. Even though on individual merits their rank might be less.

This applies specially to a Prophet and his Ummah (or following)

...وَمَا أَلَتْنَاهُم مِّنْ عَمَلِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ...

nor shall We deprive them (of the fruit) of aught of their works:

...كُلُّ امْرِئٍ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِينٌ (٢١)

(Yet) is each individual in pledge for his deeds.

C5055. As already explained in the last note, though the love poured out by Prophets, ancestors, descendants, friends, or good men and women, will secure for their loved ones the enjoyment of their society, it is an indispensable condition that the loved ones should also, according to their lights, have shown their faith and their goodness in deeds. Each individual is responsible for his conduct.

In the kingdom of heaven there is no boasting of ancestors or friends. But it is part of the satisfaction of the good ones who poured out their love that those who were in any way worthy to receive their love should also be admitted to their society, and this satisfaction shall in no way be diminished to them.

وَأَمْدَدْنَاهُم بِفَاكِهَةٍ وَلَحْمٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٢٢)

22. And We shall bestow on them, of fruit and meat, anything they shall desire.

C5056. Note that this verse is embedded in the midst of the description of social bliss; the individual bliss figured by meat and drink has already been mentioned in verse 19 above.

The social pleasure will be of any kind or quantity they shall desire, but their desires will then be purified, just as their pleasures will be on a different plan. (R).

يَتَنَازَعُونَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا لَّا لَغْوٌ فِيهَا وَلَا تَأْثِيمٌ (٢٣)

23. They shall there exchange, one with another, a (loving) cup free of frivolity, free of all taint of ill.

C5057. Drinking or loving cups, in our life on this earth, are apt to be misused in two ways:

- they may be occasions for mere frivolity or the wasting of time;
- they may lead to evil thoughts, evil suggestions, evil talk, or evil deeds. (R).

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ غِلْمَانٌ لَّهُمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لُؤْلُؤٌ مَّكْنُونٌ (٢٤)

24. Round about them will serve, (devoted) to them, youths (handsome) as Pearls well-guarded.

C5058. Maknun: well-guarded, kept close, concealed from exposure:

the beautiful nacreous lustre of Pearls is disfigured by exposure to gases, vapours, or acids; when not actually in use they are best kept in closed caskets, guarded from deteriorating agencies.

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٢٥)

25. They will advance to each other, engaging in mutual enquiry.

C5059. The third-and the highest-stage of Bliss, after individual Bliss and social Bliss, is the satisfaction of looking to the Past without its shadows and realising to the full in the Present the goodness of Allah. See n. 5050.

This, again, is shared in mutual converse and confidence.

قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِي أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ (٢٦)

26. They will say: "Aforetime, We were not without fear for the sake of our people.

C5060. A man may be good, and may with limits have found goodness in his own spiritual life, but may have anxieties about his family or friends whom he loves. All such shadows are removed in heaven by the Grace of

Allah, and he is free to dwell on it in his confidential converse with other men similarly circumstanced,

فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقَانَا عَذَابَ السَّمُومِ (٢٧)

27. "But Allah has been good to us, and has delivered us from the Penalty of the Scorching Wind.

C5061. "Us" includes the good man or woman and all whom he or she cared for. This would be an ever-expanding circle, until it includes all mankind through Teachers like the Chosen One.

The "Scorching Wind" is the type of haste, arrogance, and fire, such as entered into the composition of Jinns: 15:27.

The destiny of man is to attain to calm, peace, security, the Garden of Bliss.

إِنَّا كُنَّا مِن قَبْلُ نَدْعُوهُ...

28. "Truly we did call unto Him from of old:

إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْبَرُّ الرَّحِيمُ (٢٨)

truly it is He, the Beneficent, the Merciful"

C5062. 'Before this, we called upon Him, in faith that He is good: now we know in our inmost souls that He is indeed good-the Beneficent, the Merciful.'

This is the climax of the description of Heaven.

Section 2

فَذَكِّرْ ...

29. Therefore proclaim thou the praises (of thy Lord):

C5063. The greatest of the Prophets was called a soothsayer, i.e., one who tells fortunes by divination, or a madman possessed of some evil spirit, or a poet singing spiteful satires.

Much more may lesser men be called by such names because they proclaim the Truth. They should go on in spite of it all. (R).

... فَمَا أَنتَ بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ بِكَاهِنٍ وَلَا مَجْنُونٍ (٢٩)

For by the Grace of thy Lord, thou art no (vulgar) soothsayer, nor art thou one possessed.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ شَاعِرٌ نَّتَرَبَّصُ بِهِ رَيْبَ الْمَنُونِ (٣٠)

30. Or do they say -- "A Poet! we await for him some **calamity** (hatched) by Time!"

C5064. If a spiteful poet foretells evil calamities for men, men can afford to laugh at him, hoping that time will bring about its revenge, and spite will come to an evil end.

For the various meanings of **Raib**, see n. 1884 to 14:9.

Some Commentators suggest Death' as the Calamity hatched by Time.

قُلْ تَرَبَّصُوا فَإِنِّي مَعَكُم مِّنَ الْمُتَرَبِّصِينَ (٣١)

31. Say thou: "Await ye! I too will wait along with you!"

C5065. Cf. 9:52.

If the wicked wait or look for some calamity to befall the Prophet, the Prophet can with far more justice await the decision of the issue between him and his persecutors. For he stands for right, and Allah will support the right.

أَمْ تَأْمُرُهُمْ أَحْلَامُهُم بِهَذَا ...

32. Is it that their faculties of understanding urge them to this,

C5066. It may be that the persecutors of Truth are ignorant, and their deficient faculties of understanding mislead them, but it is more often the case that they are perverse rebels against the law of Allah, defending their own selfish interests, and preventing those whom they oppress, from getting justice,

... أَمْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُونَ (٣٢)

or are they but a people transgressing beyond bounds?

C5067. Cf. 51:53.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ تَقَوَّلَهُ ...

33. Or do they say, "He fabricated the (Message)"?

C5068. As an alternative to the charges of being a soothsayer or a madman or a disgruntled poet, there is the charge of a forger or fabricator applied to the prophet of Allah when he produces his Message.

This implies that there can be no revelation or inspiration from Allah. Such an attitude negatives Faith altogether. But if this is so, can they produce a work of man that can compare with the inspired Word of Allah? They cannot.

Cf. n. 37-39, and 17:88.

... بَل لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٣٣)

Nay, they have no faith!

فَلْيَأْتُوا بِحَدِيثٍ مِّثْلِهِ إِن كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ (٣٤)

34. Let them then produce a recital like unto it -- if (it be) they speak the Truth!

أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ ...

35. Were they created of nothing,

C5069. "Were they created of nothing?"

Three possible alternative meanings are suggested by the Commentators, according to the meaning we give to the Arabic preposition min=of, by, with, for.

- 'Were they created by nothing?

  Did they come into existence of themselves?

  Was it a mere chance that they came into being?

- Were they created as men out of nothing?

  Was there not a wonderful seed, from which their material growth can be traced, as the handiwork of a wise and wonderful Creator?

  Must they not then seek His Will?

- Were they created for nothing, to no purpose?

  If they were created for a purpose, must they not try to learn that purpose by understanding Allah's Revelation?

... أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ (٣٥)

or were they themselves the creators?

أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَل لَّا يُوقِنُونَ (٣٦)

36. Or did they create the heavens and the earth?

Nay, they have no firm belief.

C5070. They obviously did not create the wonders of the starry heavens and the fruitful globe of the earth. But they can assign no definite cause to explain it, as they have no firm belief on the subject themselves.

... أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَبِّكَ

37. Or are the Treasures of thy Lord with them,

C5071. Cf. 6:50, and n. 867.

The Treasures of Allah's Knowledge are infinite. But the doubters and unbelievers have no access to them, much less can the doubters and unbelievers manage the wonders of this world. Must they not therefore seek grace and revelation from Allah?

... أَمْ هُمُ الْمُصَيْطِرُونَ (٣٧)

or are they the managers (of affairs)?

... أَمْ لَهُمْ سُلَّمٌ يَسْتَمِعُونَ فِيهِ

38. Or have they a ladder, by which they can (climb up to heaven and) listen (to its secrets)?

C5072. Cf. 6:35:

a reference to the Pagan belief that by means of a material ladder a man might climb up to heaven and learn its secrets!

فَلْيَأْتِ مُسْتَمِعُهُم بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٨)

Then let (such a) listener of theirs produce a manifest proof.

أَمْ لَهُ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَكُمُ الْبَنُونَ (٣٩)

39. Or has He only daughters and ye have sons?

C5073. Cf. 16:57-59, and n. 2082.

To the gospel of Unity it is repugnant to assign begotten sons or daughters to Allah. But the Arab superstition about angels being the daughters of Allah was particularly blasphemous as the Pagan Arabs hated to have daughters themselves and considered it a mark of humiliation!

أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ أَجْرًا فَهُم مِّن مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُونَ (٤٠)

40. Or is it that thou dost ask for a reward, so that they are burdened with a load of debt? --

C5074. The prophets of Allah ask for no reward to preach the Message of Allah and direct men to the right Path. Why then do men shun them and persecute those who seek to bring blessings to them?

أَمْ عِندَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُونَ (٤١)

41. Or that the Unseen is in their hands, and they write it down?

C5075. The Unseen is a subject of Revelation, though it works through the common everyday life of man. The men who reject Revelation simply because it is outside their own experience ought on the contrary to try to learn about it and seek to understand it.

أَمْ يُرِيدُونَ كَيْدًا...

42. Or do they intend a plot (against thee)?

C5076. Shallow men who plot against Good are themselves the willing victims of insidious plots laid by Evil.

...فَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هُمُ الْمَكِيدُونَ (٤٢)

But those who defy Allah are themselves involved in a Plot!

أَمْ لَهُمْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ...

43. Or have they a god other then Allah?

C5077. This is the final and decisive question:

Is there really any god other than Allah the One True God?

Every argument points to the negative. A series of questions has been asked above pointing to the negative of the superstitions of the godless.

The gospel of Unity, Revelation, and the Hereafter has thus been preached by a searching examination of the position of the Unbelievers. And the Surah ends with an exhortation to leave alone those who will not believe because they wish not to believe, and to let Time work out the web and pattern of Allah's Plan,

...سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٤٣)

exalted is Allah far above the things they associate with Him!

... وَإِن يَرَوْا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ سَاقِطًا

44. Were they to see a piece of the sky falling (on them),

C5078. In 26:187, Shu'ayb, the Prophet of Allah, is challenged by the Companions of the Wood "to cause a piece of the sky to fall on us, if thou art truthful."

Such a challenge, in some form or other, is addressed to all prophets of Allah. It is mere defiance. It has no meaning.

... يَقُولُوا سَحَابٌ مَّرْكُومٌ (٤٤)

they would (only) say: "clouds gathered in heaps!"

If a piece of the sky were to fall on them, it would not convince them, for they would only say: "These are only clouds gathered in heaps."

They do not wish to believe. Otherwise there are ample Signs and Evidences of Allah's Plan in Creation and in man's own heart.

فَذَرْهُمْ حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي فِيهِ يُصْعَقُونَ (٤٥)

45. So leave them alone until they encounter that Day of theirs, wherein they shall (perforce) swoon (with terror) --

C5079. That is, the Day of Judgment.

Cf. 39:68, and n. 4343.

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٤٦)

46. The Day when their plotting will avail them nothing and no help shall be Given them.

وَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا عَذَابًا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ ...

47. And verily, for those who do wrong, there is another punishment besides this:

C5080. The final Judgment is for all. But in addition, wrong-doers have to fear a retribution or punishment in this very life, an open punishment through external events, or at least the bitter pangs of conscience within.

... وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٧)

but most of them understand not.

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا...

48. Now await in patience the command of thy Lord: for verily thou art in our eyes:

C5081. The messenger of Allah must strive his utmost to proclaim the Message of Allah: as for results, it is not for him to command them. He must wait patiently, in the knowledge that he is not forgotten by Allah, but is constantly under Allah's eyes,-Under His loving care and protection. And he must glorify Allah's name, as he is a standard- bearer of Allah's Truth.

...وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ (٤٨)

and celebrate the praises of thy Lord the while thou standest forth.

C5082. The translators and Commentators nearly all understand **taqumu** in the sense of rising up from sleep. But the rendering I have given is consistent with Quranic usage.

In 26:218, we have the same two words **hina taqumu**, meaning "standing forth (in prayer)".

In 57:25, we have **"li-yaqum an-nasu bil-qisti"**, which obviously means "that men may stand forth in justice," i.e., do all their business in justice.

In 78:38, we have **yaqumu** used for the angels standing forth in ranks.

On my rendering the meaning will be:

> 'celebrate Allah's praises when you stand forth in prayer, or at all times when you go about your business; but also for part of the night and at early dawn when worldly life is at a standstill.'

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ ...

49. And for part of the night

C5083. It is not necessary to understand this for any particular canonical prayers. It is good to spend a part of the night in prayer and praise: Cf. 73:6.

And the Dawn is a daily recurring miracle, full of spiritual influences and "testimony": Cf. 17:78-79.

... فَسَبِّحْهُ وَإِدْبَارَ النُّجُومِ (٤٩)

also praise thou Him -- and at the retreat of the stars!

C5084. Idbar-un-nujum: the setting of the stars: the glorious hour of early dawn.

In 113:1, we seek Allah's protection as "Lord of the Dawn".

The Absolute Reality

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

That man can have nothing but what he strives for;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Najm

النَّجْم

Introduction and Summary

This is an early Makkan Surah, and is the fourth of the series of seven which were described in the introduction to Surah 50.

The particular theme of this Surah is that Revelation is not an illusion: the illusion is in the minds of those who doubt and have false ideas of Allah: Allah is the source and goal of all things.

In some Surahs the consecutive arrangement is shown or suggested by a cue-word. Here the cue-word is "star", corresponding to "star" in the last verse of the last Surah.

So in 46:2, the words; "Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom": are carried forward from the last verse of Surah 45, and indeed the same words occur in the first verse of Surah 45.

So, again the words; "Most Merciful, Oft-Forgiving"; in 34:2, refer back to the words; "Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful"; in the last line of Surah 33.

In Surah 54:1, the nearness of Judgement recalls the same idea at the end of the previous Surah (53:57).

Other examples will also be found.

Summary- The impression received by the Prophet in revelation is neither error on his part nor deception by others, nor does he speak from selfish motives: it comes clearly from Allah, Who is not what the vain imagination of men conceive: He is Al-in-All, First and Last, Lord of all. Ample in forgiveness (53:10-32, and C. 229).

Those who turn away are petty and ignorant, not knowing that Allah is the source and goal of all things---in men, in nature, and in the events of history; therefore serve ye Him (53:33-62, and C. 230).

C.229 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(53:1-32)

True revelation is not a process
Either of error or deception, nor does
The Prophet speak from himself as he desires.
It is Allah's inspiration, true, without doubt.
It is reality--- the inner reality
Of heaven as far as knowledge can reach.
Not the false ideas and idols that men
Construct for themselves, names without truth
Behind them. The goal of all things is Allah,
As He is the One from Whom starts Reality.

No other can e'er intercede except
As He wills, He made us, and knows all
That we are. It is not for us to justify
Ourselves, but to offer ourselves as we are.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالنَّجْمِ ...

1. By the Star...

C5085. Najm is interpreted in various ways. As most commonly accepted, it means either a Star generically, or the close cluster of seven stars known as the Pleiades in the Constellation Taurus, which the sun enters about the 21st of April every year.

In mid-April, or a little later, the beautiful cluster would set just after the sun, after having gradually ascended the sky in the winter months. In late May, or a little later, it would rise just before the sun. In its western aspects, it might be considered a spring constellation.

To open-air nations (including the Arabs) whose climate usually presents starry skies, this is an object of great interest, and many folklore tales gather round it.

When so glorious a cluster is content to bow down in the horizon and merge its light in the greater light created by Allah, it becomes a symbol of humility in beauty and power before the Most High. Whose revelation discloses the summit of beauty, power, and wisdom.

إِذَا هَوَى (١) ...

... when it goes down --

Hawa in the text may mean either "goes down (or sets)" or "rises". Whichever meaning we take, it makes no difference to the interpretation given above.

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى (٢)

2. Your Companion is neither astray nor being misled,

C5086. "Your Companion" is the holy Prophet Muhammad, who had lived among the Quraish. He is defended from three kinds of charges that the Unbelievers brought against him:

- that he was going astray, either through defect of intelligence or through carelessness;
- that he was being misled or deceived by evil spirits; and
- that he spoke out of a whim or impulse, or from a selfish desire to impress his own personality.

None of these charges were true. On the contrary he had direct inspiration from Allah.

وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى (٣)

3. Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desire.

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى (٤)

4. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him:

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى (٥)

5. He was taught by one mighty in Power,

C5087. This is referred by the Commentators to the angel Gabriel, through whom the inspiration came.

Cf. 81:20.

ذُو مِرَّةٍ ...

6. Endued with Wisdom:

... فَاسْتَوَى (٦)

For he appeared (in stately form)

وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى (٧)

7. While he was in the highest part of the horizon:

C5088. Gabriel appeared in stately form, perhaps towering above the Mountains of Light (see C. 31).

Istawa in verse 6 translated "appeared", means literally "mounted" or "ascended", or "set himself to execute a design";

see n. 1386 to 10:3.

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى (٨)

8. Then he approached and came closer,

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى (٩)

9. And was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or (even) nearer;

C5089. Two bow-shots (counting 100 to 150 yards to a bow-shot) would be a dearly visible distance. (R).

فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ ...

10. So did (Allah) convey the inspiration to His Servant --

C5090. Gabriel would be just a messenger, to do no more than convey Allah's Message to Allah's Messenger.

... مَا أَوْحَى (١٠)

(conveyed) what He (meant) to convey.

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى (١١)

11. The (Prophet's) (mind and) heart in no way falsified that which he saw.

C5091. "Heart" in Arabic includes the faculty of intelligence as well as the faculty of feeling.

The impression conveyed was pure truth; there was no illusion in it.

أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى (١٢)

12. Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw?

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَى (١٣)

13. For indeed he saw him at a second descent.

C5092. The first occasion when Gabriel appeared in a visible form was at the Mountain of Light, when he brought his first revelation beginning with Iqra';

The second was at the Prophet's Miraj or Ascension: see Introduction to Surah 17.

These were the only two occasions when Gabriel appeared in visible form. (R).

عِندَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى (١٤)

14. Near the Lote-tree beyond which none may pass:

C5093. For the **Lote-tree** in its literal meaning, see n. 3814 to 34:16.

The wild Lote is thorny; under cultivation it yields good fruit and shade, and is symbolic of heavenly bliss, as here and in 56:28.

عِندَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى (١٥)

15. Near it is the Garden of Abode.

C5094. The **"Garden of Abode" (Jannat al-Mawa)** lies close to the Lote-Tree and, in the opinion of some authorities, is so called because the souls of believers will find their abode therein. [Eds.].

إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى (١٦)

16. Behold, the Lote-tree was shrouded (in mystery unspeakable!)

مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى (١٧)

17. (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong!

لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى (١٨)

18. For truly did he see, of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest!

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّى (١٩)

19. Have ye seen Lat, and Uzza,

C5095. From the heights of divine Glory, we come back again to this sorry earth, with its base idolatries. We are asked to "look at this picture, and at that!"

The three principal idols of Pagan Arab Idolatry were the goddesses

- Lat,
- Uzza, and
- Manat.

Opinions differ as to their exact forms: one version is that

- Lat was in human shape,
- Uzza had its origin in a sacred tree, and
- Manat in a white stone. (R).

وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَى (٢٠)

20. And another, the third (goddess), Manat?

أَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْأُنثَى (٢١)

21. What! for you the male sex, and for Him, the female?

C5096. To show Allah in human shape, or imagine sons or daughters of Allah, as if Allah were flesh, was in any case a derogation from the supreme glory of Allah, high above all creatures, even if the human shapes were invested with great beauty and majesty as in the Greek Pantheon. But when we consider in what low opinion Pagan Arabia held the female sex, it was particularly degrading to show Allah, or so-called daughters of Allah, in female shapes.

Cf. 16:57-59, and n. 2082; also 52:39, and n. 5073.

تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَى (٢٢)

22. Behold, such would be indeed a division most unfair!

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاء سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُم مَّا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلْطَانٍ ...

23. These are nothing but names which ye have devised -- ye and your fathers -- for which Allah has sent down no authority (whatever).

C5097. Cf. 7:71; 12:40 , n. 1693.

The divine names which they give to stocks and stones, or to heroes living or dead, or even to prophets and men of God, are but the creations of their own fancy. Whatever they were, they were not gods.

...إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنفُسُ...

They follow nothing but conjecture and what their own souls desire! --

C5098. Cf. 6:116.

Conjecture is a dangerous thing in speaking of divine things. It follows lines which reflect the lusts of men's own hearts. Why not follow the divine guidance which comes through the prophets of Allah?.

...وَلَقَدْ جَاءهُم مِّن رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدَى (٢٣)

even though there has already come to them Guidance from their Lord!

أَمْ لِلْإِنسَانِ مَا تَمَنَّى (٢٤)

24. Nay, shall man have (just) anything he hankers after?

C5099. The unpurified desires of men's hearts often lead to destruction, for they are dictated by Evil. The true source of guidance and light is Allah, just as He is also the goal to which all persons and things-all existence-returns.

فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَى (٢٥)

25. But it is to Allah that the End and the Beginning (of all things) belong.

Section 2

... وَكَم مِّن مَّلَكٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ

26. How many so ever be the angels in the heavens,

C5100. We are apt to imagine the angelic host of heaven as beings of immense power. But their power is all derived from Allah.

Men, when they attain to the highest spiritual dignities, may have even more power and position than angels in the sight of Allah, as in typified by angels being hidden to bow down to Adam: 2:34.

The Quraish superstition about angels being intermediaries and intercessors for man with Allah is condemned.

... لَا تُغْنِي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا...

their intercession will avail nothing

...إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ أَن يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَن يَشَاء وَيَرْضَى (٢٦)

except after Allah has given leave for whom He pleases and that he is acceptable to Him.

C5101. Cf. 20:109 and 21:28.

No one can intercede except with the permission of Allah, and that permission will only be given for one who is acceptable to Allah.

For a possible different shade of meaning. See n. 2634 to 20:109.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيُسَمُّونَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْأُنثَى (٢٧)

27. Those who believe not in the Hereafter, name the angels with female names.

C5102. Cf. 53:21, above, and n. 5096.

The Pagan Quraish had no firm belief in the Hereafter. Their prayers for intercession to angels and deities was on account of their worldly affairs.

وَمَا لَهُم بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ...

28. But they have no knowledge therein.

They follow nothing but conjecture;

...لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا (٢٨)

and conjecture avails nothing against Truth.

C5103. Cf. 53:23 above, and n. 5098.

فَأَعْرِضْ عَن مَّن تَوَلَّى عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (٢٩)

29. Therefore shun those who turn away from Our Message and desire nothing but the life of this world.

ذَٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُم مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ...

30. That is as far as knowledge will reach them.

C5104. Men with a materialist turn of mind, whose desires are bounded by sex and material things, will not go beyond those things. Their knowledge will be limited to the narrow circle in which their thoughts move.

The spiritual world is beyond their ken. While persons with a spiritual outlook, even though they may fail again and again in attaining their full ideals, are on the right Path. They are willing to receive guidance and Allah's Grace will find them out and help them.

... إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ...

Verily thy Lord knoweth best those who stray from His path,

... وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدَى (٣٠)

and He knoweth best those who receive guidance.

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

31. Yea, to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth;

... لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاؤُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى (٣١)

so that He rewards those who do evil, according to their deeds, and He rewards those who do good, with what is best.

C5105. All deeds have their consequences, good or ill. But this is not an iron law, as the Determinists in philosophy, or the preachers of bare Karma, would have us believe.

Allah does not sit apart. He governs the world. And Mercy as well as Justice are His attributes. In His Justice every deed or word or thought of evil has its consequence for the doer or speaker or thinker. But there is always in this life room for repentance and amendment. As soon as this is forthcoming, Allah's Mercy comes into action. It can blot out our evil, and the **"reward"** which it gives is nearly always greater than our merits.

الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ...

32. Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds. Only (falling into) small faults,

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ...

verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness.

C5106. Allah's attributes of Mercy and Forgiveness are unlimited. They come into action without our asking, but on our bringing our wills as offerings to Him. Our asking or prayer helps us to bring our minds and wills as offering to Him. That is necessary to frame our own psychological preparedness. it informs Allah of nothing, for He knows all.

...هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنتُمْ أَجِنَّةٌ فِي

بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ...

He knows you well when He brings you out of the earth, and when ye are hidden in your mother's wombs,

...فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى (٣٢)

therefore justify not yourselves. He knows best who it is that guards against evil.

C5107. As Allah knows our inmost being, it is absurd for us to justify ourselves either by pretending that we are better than we are or by finding excuses for our conduct. We must offer ourselves unreservedly such as we are: it is His Mercy and Grace that will cleanse us. If we try, out of love for Him, to guard against evil, our striving is all that He asks for.

C.230 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(53:33-62)

When once in Allah's Way, turn not away,
Nor check your generous impulse to give
Your all to Allah. The spiritual world
Unseen is above all worldly bargains.
Each soul must bear its own responsibility.
It must strive its utmost and attain its end.
The final Goal of all is Allah;
In His hands are Laughter and Tears, Life
And Death, the mystery of Birth and Creation,
And the Hereafter. He Controls our Bliss
And inner satisfaction. He is Lord
Of the highest and noblest in Nature. His hand
Traces the course of History, Learn,
Oh learn from His Revelation and
Adore the Lord of your inmost Soul!

Section 3

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى (٣٣)

33. Seest thou one who turns back.

C5108. The particular reference in this passage, according to Baidhawi is to Walid ibn Mugaira, who bargained with a Quraish Pagan for a certain sum if the latter would take upon himself the sins of Walid. He paid a part of the sum but withheld the rest.

The general application that concerns us is threefold:

- if we accept Islam, we must accept it whole-heartedly and not look back to Pagan superstitions;
- we cannot play fast and loose with our promises and,
- no man can bargain about spiritual matters for he cannot see what his end will be unless he follows the law of Allah, which is the law of righteousness.

وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى (٣٤)

34. Gives a little, then hardens (his heart)?

أَعِندَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرَى (٣٥)

35. What! has he knowledge of the Unseen so that he can see?

C5109. 'So that he can see what will happen in the Hereafter': for no bargains can be struck about matters unknown.

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى (٣٦)

36. Nay, is he not acquainted with what is in the books of Moses --

C5110. Books of Moses: apparently not the Pentateuch, in the Torah, but some other book or books now lost. For example, the Book of the Wars of Jehovah is referred to in the Old Testament (Num. 21:14) but is now lost. The present Pentateuch has no clear message at all of a Life to come.

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ ...

37. And of Abraham

C5111. No original Book of Abraham is now extant. But a book called "The Testament of Abraham" has come down to us, which seems to be a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. See n. 6094 to 87:19, where the Books of Moses and Abraham are again mentioned together.

... الَّذِي وَفَّى (٣٧)

who fulfilled his engagements? --

C5112. One of the titles of Abraham is **Hanif**, the True in Faith.

Cf. 16:120, 123.

أَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى (٣٨)

38. Namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another;

C5113. Here follows a series of eleven aphorisms.

- The first is that a man's spiritual burden-the responsibility for his sin must be borne by himself and not by another: Cf. 6:164.

There can be no vicarious atonement.

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى (٣٩)

39. That man can have nothing but what he strives for;

وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى (٤٠)

40. That (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight;

C5114. The second and third aphorisms are that

- man must strive, or he will gain nothing;
- and that if he strives, the result must soon appear in sight and he will find his reward in full measure.

ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَى (٤١)

41. Then will he be rewarded with a reward complete;

وَأَنَّ إِلَى رَبِّكَ الْمُنتَهَى (٤٢)

42. That to thy Lord is the final Goal;

C5115. The fourth, fifth, and sixth aphorisms are that

- all things return to Allah;
- that all our hope should be in Him;
- and we should fear none but Him: and that He alone can give Life and Death.

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَى (٤٣)

43. That it is He who Granteth Laughter and Tears;

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَمَاتَ وَأَحْيَا (٤٤)

44. That it is He who Granteth Death and Life;

وَأَنَّهُ خَلَقَ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى (٤٥)

45. That He did create in pairs -- male and female.

C5116. The seventh aphorism relates to sex:

- all things are created in pairs: each sex performs its proper function, and yet its wonderful working is part of the creative process of Allah: the living seed fructifies, but contains within itself all the factors disclosed in its later development and life.

مِن نُّطْفَةٍ إِذَا تُمْنَى (٤٦)

46. From a seed when lodged (in its place);

وَأَنَّ عَلَيْهِ النَّشْأَةَ الْأُخْرَى (٤٧)

47. That He hath promised a Second Creation (raising of the Dead)

C5117.

- No less wonderful is the promise He has made about the raising of the dead, and a new life in the Hereafter,

and this is the subject of the eighth aphorism.

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَغْنَى وَأَقْنَى (٤٨)

48. That it is He Who giveth wealth and satisfaction;

C5118.

- Wealth and material gain are sought by most men, in the hope that they will be a source of enjoyment and satisfaction. But this hope is not always fulfilled. There is a physical and spiritual

side to it. But both the material and the spiritual side depend upon the working of Allah's Plan.

This is referred to in the ninth aphorism.

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشِّعْرَى (٤٩)

49. That He is the Lord of Sirius (the Mighty Star);

C5119. The tenth aphorism

- refers to a mighty phenomenon of nature, the magnificent star Sirius, which is such a prominent object in the skies, in the early part of the solar year, say, from January to April. It is the brightest star in the firmament, and its bluish light causes wonder and terror in Pagan minds. The Pagan Arabs worshipped it as a divinity. But Allah is the Lord, Creator and Cherisher, of the most magnificent part of Creation, and worship is due to Him alone.

وَأَنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْأُولَى (٥٠)

50. And that it is He Who destroyed the (powerful) ancient 'Ad (people),

C5120. The eleventh and last aphorism

- refers to the punishment of the most powerful ancient peoples for their sins.

For the 'Ad people, see n. 1040 to 7:65, and for the Thamud, see n. 1043 to 7:73. They were strong; and they were talented: but their strength and their talents did not save them from being destroyed for their sins.

The same may be said about the earlier generation of Noah, who were destroyed in the Flood: they "rejected Our Signs: they were indeed a blind people" (7:64); see also n. 1039 to 7:59; and 11:25-49.

Ancient 'Ad (people): some Commentators construe, "First 'Ad people", distinguishing them from the later 'Ad people, a remnant that had their day and passed away.

وَثَمُودَ فَمَا أَبْقَى (٥١)

51. And the Thamud, nor gave them a lease of perpetual life.

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَظْلَمَ وَأَطْغَى (٥٢)

52. And before them, the people of Noah,
for that they were (all) Most unjust and most insolent transgressors.

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ أَهْوَى (٥٣)

53. And He destroyed the Overthrown Cities (of Sodom and Gomorrah),

C5121. Verses 53-60 may be construed as a commentary on the aphorisms.

The story of the Overthrown Cities, to which Lut was sent for a warning, will be found in 11:74-83 and the notes thereon.

This story may well be treated as separate from the aphorisms as it refers to events that happened in the later life of Abraham.

فَغَشَّاهَا مَا غَشَّى (٥٤)

54. So that (ruins unknown) have covered them up.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارَى (٥٥)

55. Then which of the gifts of thy Lord, (O man,) wilt thou dispute about?

C5122. With a slight modification this forms the refrain of the next Surah but one, the highly artistic Surah of Rahman.

In Surah 54:15, 17 etc., there is a similar refrain in different words.

Every gift and benefit you have is from Allah, and to save you from the just punishment of your sins, Allah at all times sends revelations and Messengers to warn you. Why not accept Allah's Grace instead of disputing about it?

هَذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْأُولَى (٥٦)

56. This is a Warner, of the (series of) Warners of old!

C5123. The Prophet before the Quraish (and before us) continues the line of messengers of Allah who have come to teach mankind and lead men into unity and righteousness.

Shall we not listen to his voice?

Every day that passes, the Judgment approaches nearer and nearer. But Allah alone can say at what precise hour it will come to any of us. It is certain, and yet it is a mystery, which Allah alone can lay bare.

أَزِفَتِ الْآزِفَةُ (٥٧)

57. The (Judgment) ever approaching draws nigh:

لَيْسَ لَهَا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ (٥٨)

58. No (soul) but Allah can lay it bare.

أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ (٥٩)

59. Do ye then wonder at this recital?

C5124. Mere wondering will not do, even if it is the wonder of admiration. Each soul must strive and act, and Allah's Mercy will take it under its wings.

وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ (٦٠)

60. And will ye laugh and not weep --

C5125. The higher issues of Life and the Hereafter are serious, and therefore all that we do in this life is serious and important. We must shun inanities and frivolities. It is no laughing time. If we only realized our own shortcomings, we should weep. But weeping by itself will not help. We must try and understand Allah and adore Him. Thus shall we be able to understand ourselves and our fellow-men.

وَأَنتُمْ سَامِدُونَ (٦١)

61. Wasting your time in vanities?

فَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ وَاعْبُدُوا (٦٢)

62. But fall ye down in prostration to Allah, and adore (Him)!

C5126. And so we are invited to prostrate ourselves and adore Him. For this is the true end of Revelation and the true attitude when we understand the world, Nature, History and the working of Allah's Plan.



إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Qamar

الْقَمَرُ

Introduction and Summary

This is an early Makkan Surah, the fifth in the series dealing with Judgement, and the truth of Revelation, as explained in the Introduction to Surah 50.

The theme of the Surah is explained by the refrain: "Is there any that will receive admonition?" which occurs six times, at the end of each reference to a past story of sin and rejection of warnings and in the appeal to the simplicity of Quran (verses 15, 17, 22, 32, 40, and 51). There is an invitation to listen to the Message and turn to Truth and Righteousness.

Summary- The Hour of Judgement is nigh, but men forget or reject the Message, and did the people of Noah, of 'Ad, of Thamud, of Lut, and Pharaoh. Is there any that will receive admonition? (54:1-55, and C.231).

C.231 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

With every breath of our life, comes nearer
And nearer the Hour of Judgement: the proud
Will be brought low: the lovers of ease
Will find themselves in hardship. Come!
Is there any that will truly receive admonishment?
So said Noah, but his people rejected
The warning and perished. We have made
Our Revelation easy to understand and follow.
Is there any that will truly receive admonition?
So said the prophets of 'Ad and Thamud;
So said the prophets deputed to People
Of Lut and Pharaoh: but the wicked continued
In sin and defiance and perished. Will the present
Generation learn wisdom by warning? Alas!
Is there any that will truly receive admonition?
The Righteous will dwell in their Gardens of Bliss---
In joyful Assembly of realized Truth,
In the Presence of their Sovereign Most High!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ ...

1. The hour (of Judgment) is nigh,

C5127. See Para 2 of the Introduction to Surah 53.

The idea of the Judgment being nigh at the beginning of this Sura connects it with the same idea at the end of the last Surah (verse 57), though the actual words used in the two cases are different.

وَانشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ (١) ...

and the moon is cleft asunder.

C5128. Three explanations are given in the **Mufradat**, and perhaps all three apply here:

- that the moon once appeared cleft asunder in the valley of Makkah within sight of the Prophet, his Companions, and some Unbelievers;
- that the prophetic past tense indicates the future, the cleaving asunder of the moon being a Sign of the Judgment approaching; and,
- that the phrase is metaphorical, meaning that the matter has become clear as the moon.

That the first was noticed by contemporaries, including Unbelievers, is clear from verse 2. The second is an incident of the disruption of the solar system at the New Creation: Cf. 75:8-9.

And the third might well be implied as in eastern allegory, based on the other two.

وَإِن يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ (٢)

2. But if they see a Sign, they turn away, and say,

"This is (but) transient magic."

C5129. Mustamirr: continuous, or powerful; either meaning will apply.

The Unbelievers acknowledge the unusual appearance, but call it magic. They do not therefore profit by the spiritual lesson.

وَكَذَّبُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءهُمْ وَكُلُّ أَمْرٍ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ (٣)

3. They reject (the warning) and follow their (own) lusts but **every matter has its appointed time.**

C5130. The prevalence of sin and the persecution of truth may have its day, but it must end at last.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءهُم مِّنَ الْأَنبَاء مَا فِيهِ مُزْدَجَرٌ (٤)

4. There have already come to them Recitals wherein there is (enough) to check (them),

C5131. The stories of the sins of past generations having been visited with exemplary punishments were already in their possession, and should, if they had been wise, have opened their eyes and checked them in their mad career of sin. Five of these stories are again referred to later in this Sura by way of illustration.

حِكْمَةٌ بَالِغَةٌ فَمَا تُغْنِ النُّذُرُ (٥)

5. Mature wisdom -- but (the preaching of) Warners profits them not.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ ...

6. Therefore, (O Prophet,) turn away from them.

C5132. For a time godlessness seems to triumph, but the triumph is short-lived, And in any case there is the great Reckoning of the Day of Judgment.

... يَوْمَ يَدْعُ الدَّاعِ إِلَى شَيْءٍ نُّكُرٍ (٦)

The day that the Caller will call (them) to a terrible affair.

C5133. The angel whose voice will call at the Resurrection and direct all souls.

Cf. 20:108-111.

خُشَّعًا أَبْصَارُهُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ كَأَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنتَشِرٌ (٧)

7. They will come forth -- their eyes humbled -- from (their) graves,

(torpid) like locusts scattered abroad,

C5134. At one stage in the invasion of locust swarms, the locusts are torpid and are scattered abroad all over the ground. I have seen them on railway tracks in 'Iraq, crushed to death in hundreds by passing trains.

The simile is apt for the stunned beings who will rise up in swarms from their graves and say, "Ah! woe unto us! who has raised us up?" (36:52).

مُّهْطِعِينَ إِلَى الدَّاعِ يَقُولُ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ (٨)

8. Hastening, with eyes transfixed, towards the Caller!

"Hard is this Day!" the Unbelievers will say.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ فَكَذَّبُوا عَبْدَنَا ...

9. Before them the People of Noah rejected (their messenger):

they rejected Our servant,

C5135. The story of Noah and the Flood is frequently referred to in the Quran.

The passage which best illustrates this passage will be found in 9:25-48.

Note in that passage how they first insult and abuse him arrogantly; how he humbly argues with them; how they laugh him to scorn, as much as to say that he was a madman possessed of some evil spirit; and how the Flood comes and he is saved in the Ark, and the wicked are doomed to destruction.

وَقَالُوا مَجْنُونٌ وَازْدُجِرَ (٩) ...

and said, "Here is one possessed!"

and he was driven out.

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانتَصِرْ (١٠)

10. Then he called on his Lord:

"I am one overcome: do thou then help (me)!"

C5136. He did not call down punishment. He merely asked for help in his mission, as he felt himself overpowered by brute force and cast out, which prevented the fulfilment of his mission. But the wicked generation were past all repentance, and they were wiped out.

فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاء بِمَاء مُّنْهَمِرٍ (١١)

11. So We opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring forth.

وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاء عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ (١٢)

12. And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs, **so the waters met** (and rose) **to the extent decreed.**

C5137. The torrents of rain from above combined with the gush of waters from underground springs, and caused a huge Flood which inundated the country.

وَحَمَلْنَاهُ عَلَى ذَاتِ أَلْوَاحٍ وَدُسُرٍ (١٣)

13. But We bore him on an (Ark) made of broad planks and **caulked with palm-fibre:**

C5138. Dusur, plural of **disar**, which means the palm-fibre with which boats are caulked:

from **dasara**, to ram in, to spear.

A derived meaning is "nails", (which are driven into planks): this latter meaning also applies, and is preferred by translators not familiar with the construction of simple boats.

تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا جَزَاء لِّمَن كَانَ كُفِرَ (١٤)

14. She floats under Our eyes (and care): a **recompense** to one who had been rejected (with scorn)!

C5139. As usual, Allah's Mercy in saving His faithful servants takes precedence of His Wrath and Penalty. And He helps and rewards those whom the world rejects and despises!

وَلَقَد تَّرَكْنَاهَا آيَةً ...

15. And We have left this as a **Sign** (for all time):

C5140. Cf. 29:15, where the Ark (with the salvation it brought to the righteous) is mentioned as a Sign for all Peoples.

So also in 25:37 and 26:121, it is a Sign for men.

Similarly the saving of Lut, with the destruction of the wicked Cities of the Plain, is mentioned as a Sign left for those who would understand: 29:35, and 51:37.

فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ (١٥) ...

then is there any that will receive admonition?

C5141. A refrain that occurs six times in this Surah:

see Introduction.

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ (١٦)

16. But how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning?

C5142. While the Mercy of Allah is always prominently mentioned, we must not forget or minimize the existence of Evil, and the terrible Penalty it incurs if the Grace of Allah and His Warning are deliberately rejected.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ ...

17. And We have indeed made the Qur'án easy to understand and remember:

C5143. While the Quran sums up the highest philosophy of the inner life, its simple directions for conduct are plain and easy to understand and act upon.

Is this not in itself a part of the Grace of Allah?

And what excuse is there for any one to fail in receiving admonition?

...فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ (١٧)

then is there any that will receive admonition?

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ (١٨)

18. The 'Ad (people) (too) rejected (Truth):

then how terrible was my Penalty and my Warning!

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ (١٩)

19. For We sent against **them** a furious wind, on a **Day** of violent Disaster,

C5144. Cf. 41:16.

How graphic is the description of the tornado that uprooted them! It must indeed be a dreadful tornado that plucks up the palm-trees by their deep tap- roots.

The **"Day"** is an indefinite period of time.

The wind that destroyed the 'Ad people lasted seven nights and eight days: 69:7.

تَنزِعُ النَّاسَ كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنقَعِرٍ (٢٠)

20. Plucking out men as if they were roots of palm-trees torn up (from the ground).

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ (٢١)

21. Yea, how (terrible) was my Penalty and my Warning!

C5145. Repeated from verse 18 to heighten the description of the sin, the penalty, and the criminal negligence of the sinners in refusing the warnings on account of their self-complacent confidence in their own strength and stability! It is repeated again as a secondary refrain in 54:30 and (with slight modification) in 54:32 and 39.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ (٢٢)

22. But We have indeed made the Qur'án easy to understand and remember:

then is there any that will receive admonition?

Section 2

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِالنُّذُرِ (٢٣)

23. The Thamud (also) rejected (their) Warners.

فَقَالُوا أَبَشَرًا ...

24. For they said: "what! a man!

C5146. The psychology of the Thamud is more searchingly analyzed here than in 41:17, to show up the contrast between shallow men's ideas about Revelation, and the real sanity, humanism, social value, and truth of Revelation. To them the Revelation was brought by Salih.

... مِّنَّا وَاحِدًا نَّتَّبِعُهُ ...

a solitary one from among ourselves! shall we follow such a one?

C5147. Because the Prophet is one among so many, and different from them, although brought up among themselves, it is made a cause of reproach against him, when it should have been an index leading to a searching of their hearts and an examination of their ways.

... إِنَّا إِذًا لَّفِي ضَلَالٍ وَسُعُرٍ (٢٤)

Truly should we then be straying in mind, and mad!

أَؤُلْقِيَ الذِّكْرُ عَلَيْهِ مِن بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُوَ كَذَّابٌ أَشِرٌ (٢٥)

25. "Is It that the Message is sent to him, of all people amongst us?

Nay, he is a liar an insolent one!"

C5148. Pure abuse, as a contrast to Salih's expostulation!

See 26:141-158, and notes.

سَيَعْلَمُونَ غَدًا مَّنِ الْكَذَّابُ الْأَشِرُ (٢٦)

26. Ah! they will know on the morrow, which is the liar, the insolent one!

إِنَّا مُرْسِلُو النَّاقَةِ فِتْنَةً لَّهُمْ ...

27. For We will send the she camel by way of trial for them.

C5149. See n. 1044 to 7:73, for the she-camel as a trial or test case among selfish people who tried to monopolise water and pasture as against the poor.

... فَارْتَقِبْهُمْ وَاصْطَبِرْ (٢٧)

So watch them, (o Salih), and possess thyself in patience!

... وَنَبِّئْهُمْ أَنَّ الْمَاء قِسْمَةٌ بَيْنَهُمْ

28. And tell them that the water is to be divided between them:

C5150. See 26:155-156.

All were to have water in due turn. It was to be no one's monopoly. And certainly the gates were not to be shut against the poor or their cattle.

... كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ (٢٨)

each one's right to drink being brought forward (by suitable turns).

فَنَادَوْا صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطَى فَعَقَرَ (٢٩)

29. But they called to their companion, and he took a sword in hand, and hamstrung (her).

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ (٣٠)

30. Ah!

how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning!

... إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً

31. For We sent against them a single Mighty Blast,

C5151. See n. 1047 to 7:78, and Cf. the same phrase "single Blast" used for the signal for the Resurrection in 36:53.

In the case of the Thamud, the destruction seems to have been by a severe earthquake accompanied with a terrible rumbling noise.

... فَكَانُوا كَهَشِيمِ الْمُحْتَظِرِ (٣١)

and they became like the dry stubble used by one who pens cattle.

C5152. They became like dry sticks such as are used by herdsmen in making pens or enclosures for their cattle.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ (٣٢)

32. And We have indeed made the Qur'án easy to understand and remember:

then is there any that will receive admonition?

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ بِالنُّذُرِ (٣٣)

33. The People of Lut rejected (his) Warning.

C5153. The story of Lot (Lut) and the Cities of the Plain has been frequently referred to.

See 11:74-83.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَاصِبًا ...

34. We sent against them a violent tornado with showers of **stones**,

C5154. Hasib: a violent tornado bringing a shower of stones. The word occurs here;

in 17:68 (without reference to any particular place);

in 29:40 (where it seems to refer to Lut's Cities, see n. 3462);

and in 67:17 (where again there is no reference to a particular place).

In Lut's Cities the shower was of brimstone: see 11:82.

...إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ نَّجَّيْنَاهُم بِسَحَرٍ (٣٤)

(which destroyed them), except Lut's household: them We delivered by early Dawn --

...نِعْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِنَا

35. As a Grace from Us:

...كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي مَن شَكَرَ (٣٥)

Thus do We reward those who give thanks.

C5155. "Giving thanks" to Allah in Quranic phrase is to obey Allah's Law, to do His Will, to practice righteousness, to use all gifts in His service.

وَلَقَدْ أَنذَرَهُم بَطْشَتَنَا ...

36. And (Lut) did warn them of Our Punishment,

C5156. Cf. 11:78-79.

... فَتَمَارَوْا بِالنُّذُرِ (٣٦)

but they disputed about the Warning.

... وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدُوهُ عَن ضَيْفِهِ فَطَمَسْنَا أَعْيُنَهُمْ

37. And they even sought to snatch away his guests from him, but We blinded their eyes.

C5157. Lut had been preaching to them some time against their iniquities. The crisis of their fate came when the two angels came to Lut in the guise of handsome young men.

The men of the whole City came in an uproar, assaulted his house, and tried to snatch away the two handsome men. Lut tried to prevent them, but was powerless.

Darkness fell on their eyes, as the first stage in their punishment, and before next morning the wicked cities were buried under a shower of brimstone. Lot and his believing household were saved.

... فَذُوقُوا عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ (٣٧)

(They heard:) "Now taste ye My Wrath and My Warning."

وَلَقَدْ صَبَّحَهُم بُكْرَةً عَذَابٌ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ (٣٨)

39. "So taste ye My Wrath and My Warning."

فَذُوقُوا عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ (٣٩)

38. Early on the morrow an abiding Punishment seized them:

39. "So taste ye My Wrath and My Warning."

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ (٤٠)

40. And We have indeed made the Qur'án easy to understand and remember:

then is there any that will receive admonition?

Section 3

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَ آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ النُّذُرُ (٤١)

41. To the **people of Pharaoh**, too, aforetime, came Warners (from Allah).

C5158. The Egyptian people of old are the last people mentioned in this Surah as an example of iniquity meeting with punishment. And the moral is driven home to the Pagan Quraish, to warn them of their fate if they persisted in their evil lives.

The Egyptians had many Signs given them. They were a gifted people and had made much progress in the sciences and the arts. They could have learnt from history that when the highest virtues disappear, the nation must fall. Moses was brought up among them and commissioned to give Allah's Message to them. But they were arrogant; they were unjust to Allah's creatures; they followed debasing forms of worship; they mocked at Truth; and were at last punished with destruction in the Red Sea for their arrogant leaders and army.

See 10:75-90 for a narrative.

كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كُلِّهَا فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ أَخْذَ عَزِيزٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ (٤٢)

42. The (people) rejected all Our Signs;

but We seized them with such Penalty (as comes) from One Exalted in Power, able to carry out His Will.

أَكُفَّارُكُمْ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أُولَٰئِكُمْ ...

43. Are your Unbelievers, (O Quraish), better than they?

C5159. If the Egyptians with all their power and science were unable to resist the punishment of their sins, the Pagan Quraish are asked: how will you fare when you come to a trial of strength against Allah's Truth?

You are not specially favoured so as to be immune from Allah's Law. And if you rely on your numbers, they will be a broken reed when the trial comes, as indeed happened at the Battle of Badr.

...أَمْ لَكُم بَرَاءةٌ فِي الزُّبُرِ (٤٣)

or have ye an immunity in the Sacred Books?

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ نَحْنُ جَمِيعٌ مُّنتَصِرٌ (٤٤)

44. Or do they say:

"We acting together can defend ourselves"?

سَيُهْزَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ (٤٥)

45. Soon will their multitude be put to flight, and they will show their backs.

... بَلِ السَّاعَةُ مَوْعِدُهُمْ

46. Nay, the Hour (of Judgment) is the time promised them (for their full recompense):

C5160. The calculations of unjust men-on their science, their resources, their numbers, etc.-will in many cases be falsified even in this world, as stated in the last two verses, but their real Punishment will come with Judgment, i.e., when they find their real place in the next world at the restoration of true values. It will then be a most grievous and bitter experience for them, throwing into the shade any calamities they may suffer in this life.

... وَالسَّاعَةُ أَدْهَى وَأَمَرُّ (٤٦)

And that Hour will be Most grievous and most bitter.

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي ضَلَالٍ وَسُعُرٍ (٤٧)

47. Truly those in sin are the ones straying in mind, and mad.

C5161. Cf. 54:24 above.

Note how the tables are turned in the argument by the repetition.

The unjust think that the godly are wandering in mind and mad. They will find that it is really they who were wandering in mind, and mad, even when they were in the plenitude of their power and in the enjoyment of all the good things of this life. These minor echoes heighten the effect of the major refrain mentioned in the Introduction.

يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُونَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ ...

48. The day they will be dragged through the Fire on their faces,

C5162. "On their faces": the Face is the symbol of Personality. Their whole Personality will be subverted and degraded-in the midst of the Fire of Suffering.

... ذُوقُوا مَسَّ سَقَرَ (٤٨)

(they will hear:) "Tastes ye the touch of Hell!"

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ (٤٩)

49. Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure.

C5163. Allah's Creation is not haphazard.

- Everything goes by law, proportion, and measure.
- Everything has its appointed time, place, and occasion, as also its definite limitation.
- Nothing happens but according to His Plan, and every deed, word, and thought of man has its fullest consequences, except in so far as the Grace or Mercy of Allah intervenes, and that is according to law and plan.

وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ (٥٠)

50. And Our command is but a single (Act), - like the twinkling of an eye.

C5164. While in the life of created things there is "proportion and measure", and a lag of time or distance

or circumstance, in Allah's Command, the Design, the Word, the Execution, and the Consequences are but a single Act.

The simile given is that of the twinkling of an eye, which is the shortest time that a simple man can think of: the cause which occasions the twinkling, the movement of the muscles connected with it, the closing of the eyelids, and their reopening, are all almost like a simultaneous act.

By way of contrast take an illustration like that of a man writing a book. He must form the design in his mind; he must prepare himself by research, collection of knowledge, or of personal experience; he must use or acquire the art of writing; he must collect the materials for writing, viz., paper, ink, pen, etc., and this will connect with a chain of manufacturing processes in which he is dependent upon other people's work and experience; then his book may have to be printed or lithographed or bound, and sold, or taken to a library, or presented to a friend, which will bring into play numerous other chains of processes, and dependence upon other people's work or skill; and the lag of Time, Space, and Circumstance will occur at numerous stages.

In Allah's Command, the word **"Be" (kun)** includes everything, without the intervention, of or dependence upon any other being or thing whatever. And this is also another phase of the philosophy of Unity.

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا أَشْيَاعَكُمْ ...

51. And (oft) in the past, have We destroyed gangs like unto you:

C5165. Ashyaakum: 'gangs or parties or collection of men like you.'-

addressed to wicked men who arrogantly rely upon their own strength or combination, neither of which can stand for a moment against the Will of Allah.

فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ (٥١) ...

Then is there any that will receive admonition?

C5166. The cases of Pharaoh's men of old and the Pagan Quraish are considered as parallel, and an appeal is addressed to the latter from the experience of the former: 'will ye not learn and repent?'

وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ فَعَلُوهُ فِي الزُّبُرِ (٥٢)

52. All that they do is noted in (their) Books (of Deeds):

C5167. The point is that nothing which men do is lost- good or evil. Everything gives rise to an inevitable chain of consequences, from which a release is only obtained by the intervention of Allah's Grace acting on an act, a striving of the human will to repent and turn to Allah. (R).

وَكُلُّ صَغِيرٍ وَكَبِيرٍ مُسْتَطَرٌ (٥٣)

53. Every matter, small and great, is on record.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ (٥٤)

54. As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Rivers.

C5168. The record, in the case of those who dishonoured and violated Truth, will lead to their undoing; but in the case of those who honoured the Truth and adopted it so as to shine in their righteous lives, the result is expressed by four metaphors, in an ascending degree of sublimity:

- they will be in the midst of Gardens where rivers flow;
- they will be in sure abode;
- with Allah;
- Whose sovereignty is omnipotent.

"Gardens" with Rivers (flowing beneath): this has been explained more than once already:

Cf. n. 4668 to 43:70.

The Garden suggests all the Bliss we can imagine through our senses. (R).

فِي مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ ...

55. In an Assembly of Truth,

C5169. While we possess our bodily senses, the best conceptions we can form are through our sense-perceptions, and the Garden is a good symbol from that point of view.

The next higher understanding of spiritual truth is through our intellect and social satisfaction. This is best symbolized by the Assembly of Truth - the gathering in which we sit with our fellows and enjoy the realisation of Truth and the dissipation of falsehood and half-truths.

... عِندَ مَلِيكٍ ...

in the Presence ....

C5170. But there is a higher conception still, something that it can only be expressed by reference to the Presence of Allah, (R).

... مُّقْتَدِرٍ (٥٥)

.. of a Sovereign Omnipotent.

C5171. Muqtadir, which is translated Omnipotent, implies something more: the eighth- declension form denotes not only complete mastery, but the further idea that the mastery arises from Allah's own nature, and depends on nothing else whatever. (R).

تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

Blessed be the Name of your Lord (Allâh), the Owner of Majesty and Honour.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Rahman

الرَّحْمَٰنُ

Introduction and Summary

The majority of Commentators consider this an early Makkan Surah, though some consider at least a part of it as dating from Madinah. The greater part of it is undoubtedly early Makkan.

It is highly poetical and most sublime, and the refrain "Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?" is interspersed 31 times among its 78 verses. (R).

It is the sixth of the series of seven dealing with Revelation, the favours of Allah, and the Hereafter; see Introduction to Surah 1.

Here the special theme is indicated by the refrain. The rhyme in most cases is in the Dual grammatical form, and the Argument implies that though things are created in pairs, there is an underlying Unity, through the Creator, in the favours which He bestows, and in the goal to which they are marching.

Summary- Allah Most Gracious has sent revelation, one of His greatest favours to man; His creation is in pairs, well-balanced; all created things receive His favours, but they will all pass away, and only Allah will endure through the ages (55:1-34, and C. 232).

Ultimately all evil shall return to its destination, as well as all Good, but ever blessed is the name of Allah, Lord of Glory, Honour and Bounty (55:35-78, and C. 233).

C.232 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(55:1-34)

Allah's creatures! Which favours of Allah will ye deny?
Most Gracious is Allah, Who reveals Himself
In the Quran, in man's Intelligence,
And in the nature around man.
Balance and Justice, Goodness and Care,
Are the Laws of His Worlds. Created
From clay, man can yet comprehend
The Lord of thee Easts and the Wests, Him
Who sustains all His creatures, Him
Who bestows the Jewels of Life and Faith.
Him Who abides when all else perisheth.
Him Whose Eternity is the Hope
Of man's Future, the Lord Everlasting
Of Justice and Glory and Bounty and Honour!
Which, then, of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الرَّحْمَنُ (١)

1. (Allah) Most Gracious!

عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ (٢)

2. It is He Who has taught the Qur'án.

C5172. The Revelation comes from Allah Most Gracious, and it is one of the greatest Signs of His grace and favour. He is the source of all Light, and His light is diffused throughout the universe.

خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ (٣)

3. He has created man:

عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ (٤)

4. He has taught him speech (and Intelligence),

C5173. Bayan: intelligent speech: power of expression: capacity to understand clearly the relations of things and to explain them.

Allah has given this to man, and besides this revelation in man's own heart, has aided him with revelation in nature and revelation through prophets and messengers.

الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ (٥)

5. The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed;

C5174. In the great astronomical universe there are exact mathematical laws, which bear witness to Allah's Wisdom and also to His favours to His creatures; for we all profit by the heat and light, the seasons, and the numerous changes in the tides and the atmosphere, on which the constitution of our globe and the maintenance of life depend.

وَالنَّجْمُ ...

6. And the herbs

C5175. Najm: may mean stars collectively, or herbs collectively: perhaps both meanings are implied.

وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ (٦) ...

and the trees-both (alike) bow in adoration.

C5176. All nature adores Allah.

Cf. 22:18, and n. 2790; 13:15; and 16:48-49.

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ (٧)

7. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the balance (of Justice)

C5177. The **"balance of justice"** in this verse is connected with "the Balance" in the next two verses, that men may act justly to each other and observe due balance in all their actions, following the golden mean and not transgressing due bounds in anything. But the Balance is also connected figuratively with the heavens above in three symbols:

- Justice is a heavenly virtue:
- the heavens themselves are sustained by mathematical balance; and,
- the constellation Libra (the Balance) is entered by the sun at the middle of the zodiacal year.

أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ (٨)

8. In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance.

وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ (٩)

9. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance.

C5178. To be taken both literally and figuratively.

A man should be honest and straight in every daily matter, such as weighing out things which he is selling: and he should be straight, just and honest, in all the highest dealings, not only with other people, but with himself and in his obedience to Allah's Law. Not many do either the one or the other when they have an opportunity of deceit. Justice is the central virtue, and

the avoidance of both excess and defect in conduct keeps the human world balanced just as the heavenly world is kept balanced by mathematical order.

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ (١٠)

10. It is He Who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures:

C5179. How can Allah's favours be counted?

Look at the earth alone. Life and the conditions here are mutually balanced for Allah's creatures. The vegetable world produces fruit of various kinds and corn or grain of various kinds for human food. The grain harvest yields with it fodder for animals in the shape of leaves and straw, as well as food for men in the shape of grain. The plants not only supply food but sweet-smelling herbs and flowers.

فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ (١١)

11. Therein is fruit and date-palms, producing spathes (enclosing dates):

وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ (١٢)

12. Also corn with (its) leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-smelling plants.

C5179a. ***Rayhan*** is the sweet basil, but is here used in the generic sense, for agreeable produce in the vegetable world, to match the useful produce already mentioned.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٣)

13. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

C5180. Both the pronoun **"your"** and the verb **"will ye deny"** are in the Arabic in the Dual Number.

The whole Surah is a symphony of Duality, which leads up to Unity, as explained in the Introduction. All creation is in pairs: 51:49, and notes 5025-26; 36:36, n. 3981.

Justice is the conciliation of two opposites to unity, the settlement of the unending feud between Right and Wrong. The things and concepts mentioned in this Sura

are in pairs: man and outer nature; sun and moon; herbs and trees; heaven and earth; fruit and corn; human food and fodder for cattle; things nourishing and things sweet- smelling; and so on throughout the Sura. Then there is man and Jinn, for which see n. 5182 below.

"Will ye deny?" that is, fail to acknowledge either in word or thought or in your conduct. If you misuse Allah's gifts or ignore them that is equivalent to ingratitude or denial or refusal to profit by Allah's infinite Grace.

خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ مِن صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ (١٤)

14. He created man from sounding clay like unto pottery.

C5181. See n. 1966 to 15:26.

The creation of men and Jinns is contrasted. Man was made of sounding clay, dry and brittle like pottery. The Jinn (see next note) was made from a clear flame of fire. Yet each has capacities and possibilities which only Allah's Grace bestows on them.

How can they deny Allah's favours?

وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِن مَّارِجٍ مِّن نَّارٍ (١٥)

15. And He created **Jinns** from fire free of smoke:

C5182. For the meaning of Jinn, see n. 929 to 6:100.

They are spirits, and therefore subtle like a flame of fire. Their being free from smoke implies that they are free from grossness, for smoke is the grosser accompaniment of fire. (R).

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٦)

16. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

C5183. Part of the idea of this refrain will be found in 16:71, 72; 40:81; and 53:55 (where see n. 5122).

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ (١٧)

17. (He is) Lord of the **two Easts** and Lord of the **two Wests**:

C5184. The **two Easts** are the two extreme points where the sun rises during the year, and includes all the points between. Similarly the **two Wests** include the two extreme points of the sun's setting and all the points between. The Dual Number fits with the general atmosphere of Duality in this Sura. Allah is Lord of every region of the earth and sky, and He scatters His bounties everywhere.

See also n. 4641 to 43:38, and n. 4034 to 37:5.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (١٨)

18. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ (١٩)

19. He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together:

C5185. See 25:53, and n. 3111, where it is explained how the two bodies of water, salt and sweet, meet together, yet keep separate, as if there was a barrier or partition between them.

This is also one of the favours of Allah. Sea-water is a sanitating agent, while fresh water is sweet and palatable to drink.

For the allegorical interpretation, see notes 2404 - 2405 t0 18::60; also note 5186 below.

بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيَانِ (٢٠)

20. Between them is a Barrier which they do not transgress:

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢١)

21. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ (٢٢)

22. Out of them come Pearls and Coral:

C5186. Pearls are produced by the oyster and **coral** by the polyp, a minute marine creature, which, working in millions, has by its secretions produced the reefs,

islands, and banks in and on both sides of the Red Sea and in other parts of the world.

The pearl has a translucent lustre, usually white, but sometimes pink or black. Coral is usually opaque, red or pink, but often white, and is seen in beautiful branching or cup-like shapes as visitors to Port Sudan will recall.

Both are used as gems and stand here for gems generally. Mineral gems, such as agate and cornelian, are found in river-beds. Pearl oysters are also found in some rivers.

Taken allegorically, the two kinds of gems would denote;

- the jewels of this life and
- the jewels of the spiritual world.

The jewels of this world – like coral – are hard, widely spread over the world, comparatively cheap, and less absorptive of the light from above.

The spiritual jewel – like pears – are soft, rare, costly, and translucent absorbent of light and showing the more luster the more they are in light.

The analogy can be carried further to the seas – the two bodies of flowing water – mentioned in verses 19-20 above. They are the two kinds of knowledge – human and divine – referred to in the story of Moses and Khidr: see notes 2404 - 2405 t0 18::60.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٣)

23. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنشَآتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ ...

24. And His are the Ships sailing smoothly through the seas,

C5187. The ships-sailing ships and steamers, and by extension of analogy, aeroplanes and airships majestically navigating the air-are made by man, but the intelligence and science which made them possible are given by man's Creator; and therefore the Ships also are the gifts of Allah.

كَالْأَعْلَامِ (٢٤) ...

lofty as mountains:

C5188. Lofty as mountains: both in respect of the high sails, or masts, and in respect of the height to which the top of the ship towers above the surface of the sea.

The 'Queen Mary'-the biggest ship afloat in 1936-has a height, from the keel to the top of the superstructure, of 135 ft. and from keel to the mast-head, of 234 ft.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٥)

25. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

Section 2

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (٢٦)

26. All that is on earth will perish;

وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ...

27. But will abide (forever) **the Face of thy Lord,**

C5189. The most magnificent works of man-such as they are-are but fleeting. Ships, Empires, the Wonders of Science and Art, the splendours of human glory or intellect, will all pass away.

The most magnificent objects in outer Nature-the mountains and valleys, the sun and moon, the Constellation Orion and the star Sirius-will also pass away in their appointed time.

But the only One that will endure for ever is the **"Face" of Allah.**

"Face" expresses Personality, Glory, Majesty, Inner Being, Essence, Self - all he noble qualities which we associate with the Beautiful Names of Allah.

See n. 114 t0 2:112; also n. 1154 t0 7:180, and n. 2322 t0 17:110.

... ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٢٧)

full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor.

C5190. Ikram; two ideas are prominent in the word,

1. the idea of generosity, as proceeding from the person whose attribute it is, and
2. the idea of honour, as given by others to the person whose attribute it is.

Both these ideas are summed up in "nobility". To make the meaning quite clear, I have employed in the translation the two words **"Bounty and Honour"** for the single word **Ikram**.

The same attributes recur in the last verse of this Surah.

In the Fact of Allah's Eternity is the Hope of our Future.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٨)

28. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

يَسْأَلُهُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

29. Of Him seeks (its needs) every creature in the heavens and on earth:

C5191. Every single creature depends on Allah for its needs: of all of them the Cherisher and Sustainer is Allah.

Seek (its needs): does not necessarily mean 'seek them in words': what is meant is the dependence: the allusion is to the Source of supply.

كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ (٢٩)

every day in (new) Splendor doth He (shine)!

C5192. Shan: state, splendour; aim, work, business, momentous affair.

Allah's is still the directing hand in all affairs. He does not sit apart, careless of mankind or of any of His creatures. But His working shows new Splendour every day, every hour, every moment.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٠)

30. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ أَيُّهَا الثَّقَلَانِ (٣١)

31. Soon shall We settle your affairs, o both ye worlds!

C5193. Thaqal. weight, something weighty, something weighed with something else.

The two **thaqals** are Jinns and men who are burdened with responsibility or, as some commentators hold, with sin. They are both before Allah, and the affairs of both are conducted under His Command. If there are inequalities or apparent disturbances of balance, that is only for a season. Allah gives to both good and evil men a chance in this period of probation; but this period will soon be over, and Judgment will be established. To give you this chance, this probation, this warning, is itself a favour, by which you should profit, and for which you should be grateful. (R).

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٢)

32. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ ...

33. O ye assembly of Jinns and men!

C5194. Cf. 6:130, where the Jinns and men are addressed collectively. That whole passage, 6:130-134, should be read as a commentary on this verse.

'If you think that because you do things in secret, or because some of your sins do not seem to meet their inevitable punishment or some of your good deeds seem to go unnoticed, do not be deceived. Judgment will soon come. You cannot possibly escape out of the zones in which your lives have been cast, without authority from Allah. Be grateful to Allah for the chances He has given you'.

"All that hath been promised unto you will come to pass: nor can ye frustrate it in the least bit" (6:134).

... إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَن تَنفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانفُذُوا ...

if it be ye can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass ye!

... لَا تَنفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ (٣٣)

not without authority shall ye be able to pass!

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٤)

34. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

C5195. Note how gradually we have been led up in the Argument.

'The Signs of Allah are all about you,

- in revelation,
- in your intelligence,
- and in nature around you.
- Your creation;
- the light and heat typified by the sun in all directions;
- the cycle of waters in the physical earth and of Knowledge in the world of Intelligence;
- the help and cherishing care of Allah Himself;-

all these things should teach you the Truth and warn you about the Future, which is more particularly referred to in the remainder of the Surah.

C.233 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(55:35-78)

Let not Evil think that it will escape

Justice: its telltale Mark is on those

Who follow it, and it must meet its reward

In the final adjustment. But the Good,
The Righteous, must reach their Fulfilment
In the Gardens of Bliss, where every Delight
Will be theirs in Beauty and Dignity.
How can such Delights be pictured in words?
In symbols subjective let each take his choice.
For Good can there ever be any Reward
Other than Good? Beautiful sights
And sounds, delicious fruits to nourish
The soul, and Companionship where Grace
Is mingled with Love, may figure forth our Bliss.
Blessed be Allah, full of Majesty and Bounty.
Allah's creatures! What favours of Allah will ye deny?

يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّن نَّارٍ ...

35. On you will be sent (O ye evil ones twain!) a flame of fire (to burn)

C5196. The Dual is with reference to the two worlds explained above in n. 5193.

... وَنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنتَصِرَانِ (٣٥)

and a smoke (to choke): No defence will ye have:

C5197. We now come to the terrors of the Judgment on the evil ones.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٦)

36. Then which of the **favors** of your Lord will ye deny?

C5198. Here and in some of the verses that follow, (verses 40, 42, and 45 below), the refrain applies with an ironical meaning. It is as if it was said: 'You used to laugh at Revelation, and at the warnings which were given for your own benefit in order to draw you to repentance and Allah's Mercy; what do you find now? Is not all that was said to you true?' To reject Allah's Law is in itself to deny Allah's Mercies.

فَإِذَا انشَقَّتِ السَّمَاء فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ (٣٧)

37. When the sky is rent asunder, and it becomes red like ointment:

C5199. Melting away like grease or ointment. The red colour will be due to the flames and the heat. The whole of the world as we know it now will dissolve.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاء رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٣٨)

38. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُسْأَلُ عَن ذَنبِهِ إِنسٌ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٣٩)

39. On that day no question will be **asked** of man or Jinn as to his sin.

C5200. This does not of course mean that they will not be called to account for their sin. They will certainly be called to account for all their deeds: 15:92.

The meaning of this whole passage is that their personal responsibility will be enforced. But their own tongues and hands and feet will bear witness against them as to their actions: 24:24.

Every man will bear marks on his person, showing his classification in the Final Account: 7:48. After these Marks are affixed, everyone's position and status in the Final Account will be known to everyone.

As to the Judge on the Throne of Judgment, He will of course know all before Judgment is set up. But to give every chance to the accused, his record will be produced and shown to him (69:19, 25, 18:49), and he will be given a chance to plead (7:53), but if a sinner, he will be in confusion (28:66).

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاء رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٠)

40. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بِسِيمَاهُمْ ...

41. (For) the sinners will be known by their Marks:

C5201. By their Marks: see last note.

... فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ (٤١)

and they will be seized by their forelocks and their feet.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٢)

42. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

هَذِهِ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِي يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٤٣)

43. This is the Hell which the Sinners deny.

C5202. It will then become too real to them.

"Oh! that this too, too solid flesh would melt", as Hamlet said to his Queen-Mother (Hamlet, i. 2. 129).

يَطُوفُونَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيمٍ آنٍ (٤٤)

44. In its midst and in the midst of boiling hot water will they wander round!

C5203. They will apparently have no rest. The fire will bum but not consume them, and their drink will be only boiling water.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٥)

45. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

Section 3

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ ...

46. But for such as fear the time when they will stand before (the Judgment Seat of) their Lord,

C5204. The reference to the Punishment of Sin having been dismissed in a few short lines, we now come to a description of the state of the Blessed. (R).

... جَنَّتَانِ (٤٦)

there will be two Gardens --

C5205. Here two Gardens are mentioned, and indeed four, counting the other two mentioned in 55:62-76.

Opinions are divided about this, but the best opinion is that the two mentioned in verses 46-61 are for the degree of those Nearest to Allah **(Muqarrabun)**, and those in verses 62-76 for the Companions of the Right Hand:

Why two for each?

The Duality is to express variety, and the whole scheme of the Surah runs in twos. There will be no dullness of uniformity: as our minds can conceive it now, there will be freshness in change, but it will be from Bliss to Bliss, and there will be Unity. (R).

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٧)

47. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

ذَوَاتَا أَفْنَانٍ (٤٨)

48. Containing all kinds (of trees and delights) --

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤٩)

49. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ تَجْرِيَانِ (٥٠)

50. In them (each) will be two Springs flowing (free);

C5206. Two Springs, for the same reasons as there will be two Gardens. See last note.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥١)

51. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

فِيهِمَا مِن كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوْجَانِ (٥٢)

52. In them will be Fruits of every kind, two and two.

C5207. The Duality of Fruits is for the same reason as the Duality of the Gardens.

See n. 5205.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٣)

53. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

مُتَّكِئِينَ عَلَىٰ فُرُشٍ بَطَائِنُهَا مِنْ إِسْتَبْرَقٍ ...

54. They will recline on Carpets, whose inner linings will be of rich brocade:

... وَجَنَى الْجَنَّتَيْنِ دَانٍ (٥٤)

the Fruit of the Gardens will be Near (and easy of reach).

C5208. The toil and fatigue of this life will be over:

Cf. 35:35.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٥)

55. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

فِيهِنَّ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ ...

56. In them will be (Maidens), Chaste,

C5209. See notes 4728-29 to 44:54. (R).

... لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٥٦)

restraining their glances, whom no man or Jinn before them has touched --

C5210. Cf. 47:48 and n. 4064.

Their purity is the feature chiefly symbolized.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٧)

57. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

كَأَنَّهُنَّ الْيَاقُوتُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ (٥٨)

58. Like unto rubies and coral.

C5211. Delicate pink, with reference to their complexions and their beauty of form. The gems also indicate their worth and dignity.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٩)

59. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ (٦٠)

60. Is there any Reward for Good -- other than Good?

C5212. This is the summing up of all the description used to express the Fruit of Goodness or Good. But the fullest expression can only be given in abstract terms:

"Is there any reward for Good-other than Good?"

Can anything express it better?

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦١)

61. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

وَمِن دُونِهِمَا جَنَّتَانِ (٦٢)

62. And besides these two, there are two other Gardens --

C5213. See n. 5205 above.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٣)

63. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

مُدْهَامَّتَانِ (٦٤)

64. Dark green in color (from plentiful watering).

C5214. "Dark-green in colour": these Gardens will also be fruitful and flourishing, and watered plentifully; but their aspect and characteristics will be different, corresponding to the subjective differences in the ideas of Bliss among those who would respectively enjoy, the two sets of Gardens.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٥)

65. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ نَضَّاخَتَانِ (٦٦)

66. In them (each) will be **two springs pouring forth water** in continuous abundance:

C5215. In comparison with the Springs in the other two Gardens, described in 55:50 above, these Springs would seem to irrigate crops of vegetables and fruits requiring a constant supply of abundant water.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٧)

67. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

فِيهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَنَخْلٌ وَرُمَّانٌ (٦٨)

68. In them will be Fruits, and dates and pomegranates:

C5216. See last note. Cf. also with 55:52 above, where "fruits of every kind" are mentioned.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٦٩)

69. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

فِيهِنَّ خَيْرَاتٌ حِسَانٌ (٧٠)

70. In them will be fair (companions), good, beautiful --

C5217. See n. 5209 above.

Goodness and Beauty are specially feminine attributes.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧١)

71. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

حُورٌ مَّقْصُورَاتٌ ...

72. Companions **restrained** (as to their glances),

C5218. Maqsurat here is the passive participle of the same verb as the active participle **Qasirat** in 55:56, 37:48 and 38:52.

As I have translated **Qasirat** by the phrase "restraining (their glances)", I think I am right in translating the passive **Maqsurat** by "restrained (as to their glances)". This is the only place in the Quran where the passive form occurs.

... فِي الْخِيَامِ (٧٢)

in (goodly) pavilions --

C5219. The Pavilions seem to add dignity to their status. In the other Gardens (55:58), the description "like rubies and corals" is perhaps an indication of higher dignity.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٣)

73. Then which of the favor of your Lord will ye deny?

لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَانٌّ (٧٤)

74. Whom no man or Jinn before them has touched --

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٥)

75. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

مُتَّكِئِينَ عَلَىٰ رَفْرَفٍ خُضْرٍ ...

76. Reclining on green Cushions,

C5220. Cf. the parallel words for the other two Gardens, in 55:54 above, which suggest perhaps a higher dignity.

Rafraf is usually translated by Cushions or Pillows, and I have followed this meaning in view of the word **"reclining"**.

But another interpretation is **"Meadows"**, in view of the adjective "green"-

... وَعَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ (٧٦)

and rich Carpets of beauty.

abqari: carpets richly figured and dyed, and skillfully worked.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٧٧)

77. Then which of the favors of your Lord will ye deny?

تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٧٨)

78. Blessed be the name of thy Lord, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor.

C5221. Cf. 55:27 and n. 5190.

This minor echo completes the symmetry of the two leading Ideas of this Sura,-the Bounty and Majesty of Allah, and the Duty of man to make himself worthy of nearness to Allah.



إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ لَّا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ

That (this) is indeed an honourable recital (the Noble Qur'ân). In a Book well-guarded (with Allâh in the heaven i.e. Al-Lauh Al-Mahfûz). Which (that Book with Allâh) none can touch but the purified (i.e. the angels).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Waqi'ah

الْوَاقِعَةُ

Introduction and Summary

This is the seventh and last Surah of the series devoted to Revelation and hereafter, as explained in the introduction to Surah 50.

It belongs to early Makkan period, with the possible exception of one or two verses.

the theme is the certainty of the day of Judgement and its adjustment of true Values (56:1-56); Allah's Power, Goodness and Glory (56:57-74); and the truth of Revelation (56:75-96).

Summary- When the Day of Judgement comes, the world as we know it will be shaken to its foundation, and men shall be sorted out into three sorts; those nearest to Allah, in exalted Misery (56:1-56, and C. 234).

Surely the power and Goodness of Allah, of which Revelation is a Sign, should lead man to accept the Message and glorify Him (56:57-96) and C. 235).

C.234 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(56:1-56)

The Event Inevitable is the Day
Of Judgement: the world as we know it
Will be shaken to its depths, and its place
Will be taken by a world made new,
Where Good will be sorted out from Evil.
In Dignity and Bliss will the Good find Fulfilment:
Both those Nearest to the Throne of Allah,
And those who earned, by faith and good life,
The title, Companions of the Right Hand.
Who can tell of the Misery in which
The Companions of the Left Hand will live?
They will be as it were in a fierce blast
Of Fire; their drink but boiling water;
Their shade that of Black Smoke that chokes
Their lungs-ever burning with hunger and thirst,
Of the Life in Death to which Evil leads.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (١)

1. When the event inevitable cometh to pass.

C5222. The **Event Inevitable** is the Hour of Judgment.

People may doubt now whether it will come. But when it comes, as it will come, suddenly upon them, it will come with such tremendous reality that it will be burnt deep into the experience of every soul. No one can then be deceived or entertain false notions about it.

لَيْسَ لِوَقْعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ (٢)

2. Then will no (soul) entertain falsehood concerning its coming.

خَافِضَةٌ ...

3. (Many) will it bring low,

C5223. There will be a sorting out of Good and Evil. Or rather, (verse 7 below), there will be three main classes.

- Among the Good there will be the specially exalted class, those nearest to Allah (**muqarrabun,** 56:11-26),
- and the righteous people generally, called the Companions of the Right Hand (**Ashab-ul-maimana**, 56:27-40).
- And there will be those in agony, the Companions of the Left Hand (**Ashab-ul-mash-ama,** 56:41-56).

Many who were high and mighty in this life will be brought low for their sins, and many who were lowly but virtuous will be exalted to various ranks and degrees. The old landmarks will be lost in the inner world, as they will be in the outer world.

... رَّافِعَةٌ (٣)

(many) will it exalt;

إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْأَرْضُ رَجًّا (٤)

4. When the earth shall be shaken to its depths,

وَبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا (٥)

5. And the mountains shall be crumbled to atoms,

C5224. The old physical world will disappear in the New Creation.

فَكَانَتْ هَبَاءً مُّنبَثًّا (٦)

6. Becoming dust scattered abroad,

وَكُنتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً (٧)

7. And ye shall be sorted out into three classes.

C5225. See n. 5223 above.

فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ (٨)

8. Then (there will be) the Companions of the Right Hand --
what will be the Companions of the Right Hand?

وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ (٩)

9. And the Companions of the left hand --
what will be the Companions of the Left Hand?

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ (١٠)

10. And those Foremost (in Faith) will be Foremost (in the Hereafter).

C5226. Foremost (in Faith)":

there are two meanings, and both are implied

- Those who have reached the highest degree in spiritual understanding, such as the great prophets and teachers of mankind, will also take precedence in the Hereafter.
- Those who are the first in time-the quickest and readiest-to accept Allah's Message-will have the first place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Verses 8, 9 and 10 mention the three main categories or classifications after Judgment. In the subsequent verses their happiness or misery are described. This category, Foremost in Faith, is nearest to Allah.

أُولَٰئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (١١)

11. These will be those Nearest to Allah:

C5227. See n. 5223 above.

Nearness to Allah is the test of the highest Bliss. (R).

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (١٢)

12. In Gardens of Bliss:

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣)

13. A number of people from those of old,

C5228. Of great Prophets and Teachers there were many before the time of the holy Prophet Muhammad. As he was the last of the Prophets, he and the great Teachers under his Dispensation will be comparatively fewer in number, but their teaching is the sum and flower of all mankind's spiritual experience.

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ (١٤)

14. And a few from those of later times.

عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مَّوْضُونَةٍ (١٥)

15. (They will be) on **Thrones** encrusted (with gold and precious stones).

C5229. Cf. 15:47; 37:44, 52:20, and 36:56. {Eds.}

مُّتَّكِئِينَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقَابِلِينَ (١٦)

16. Reclining on them, facing each other.

C5230. But they will not be separate each in his own corner. They will face each other. For they are all one, and their mutual society will be part of their Bliss.

يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ (١٧)

17. **Round about them will** (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness).

C5231. Cf. 52:24, and n.5058.

The youth and freshness with which the attendants will serve is a symbol of true service such as we may expect in the next world. That freshness will be perpetual, and not subject to any moods, or chances, or changes.

بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقَ وَكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ (١٨)

18. With goblets, (shining) beakers, and cups (filled) out of clear-flowing fountains:

لَا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنزِفُونَ (١٩)

19. No after-ache will they receive therefrom,

nor will they suffer intoxication:

C5232. The Feast of Reason and the Flow of Soul are typified by all that is best in the feasts in this imperfect world, but there will be none of the disadvantages incident to such feasts in this world, such as satiety, aches, excess, a sense of exhaustion, or loss of senses, etc. Cf. 37:47, and n. 4063.

A goblet is a bowl without handles;

a beaker has a "lip" and a stem;

"cup" is a general term.

وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ (٢٠)

20. And with fruits, any that they may select;

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٢١)

21. And the flesh of fowls, any that they may desire.

وَحُورٌ عِينٌ (٢٢)

22. And (there will be) Companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes --

C5233. Cf. 44:54, and n. 4729.

The companionship of Beauty and Grace is one of the highest pleasures of life. In this bodily life it takes bodily form. In the higher life it takes a higher form. (R).

كَأَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ الْمَكْنُونِ (٢٣)

23. **Like unto Pearls** well-guarded.

C5234. Cf. 52:24, where this description is applied to the youths who serve. See also n. 5058 there.

In 56:78 below the adjective **maknun** is applied to the Quran, "the well guarded Book".

جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٤)

24. A Reward for the Deeds of their past (Life).

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا ...

25. No frivolity will they hear therein

C5235. Cf. 52:23.

Apart from physical ills worldly feasts or delights are apt to suffer from vain or frivolous discourse, idle boasting, foolish flattery, or phrases pointed with secret venom or moral mischief. The negation of these from spiritual Bliss follows as a matter of course, but it is specially insisted on to guard against the perversities of human nature, which likes to read ill into the best that can be put in words.

... وَلَا تَأْثِيمًا (٢٥)

nor any taint of ill --

إِلَّا قِيلًا سَلَامًا سَلَامًا (٢٦)

26. **Only the saying**,

"Peace! Peace."

C5236. Qil is best translated "saying", rather than "word". For the saying is an act, a thought, a fact, which may be embodied in a word, but which goes far beyond the word. The "Peace of Allah" is an atmosphere which sums up Heaven even better than "Bliss".

وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ (٢٧)

27. The Companions of the Right Hand --
what will be the Companions of the Right Hand?

فِي سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُودٍ (٢٨)

28. (They will be) among lote trees without thorns,

C5237. Lote-trees: see 34:16 n. 3814. (R).

وَطَلْحٍ مَّنضُودٍ (٢٩)

29. Among Talh (Banana) **trees** with flowers (or fruits) piled one above another --

C5238. Talh: some understand by this the plantain or banana tree, of which the fruit is borne in bunches, one tier above another; but the banana tree does not grow in Arabia and its ordinary Arabic name is Mauz; perhaps it is better to understand a special kind of Acacia tree, which flowers profusely, the flowers appearing in tiers one above another.

وَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُودٍ (٣٠)

30. In shade long-extended,

وَمَاء مَّسْكُوبٍ (٣١)

31. By water flowing constantly,

وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ (٣٢)

32. And fruit in abundance,

لَّا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ (٣٣)

33. Whose season is not limited nor (supply) forbidden,

C5239. As it is not like earthly fruit, its season is not limited, nor is there any prohibition by law or custom or circumstance as to when or how it is to be consumed. (R).

وَفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ (٣٤)

34. And on Thrones (of Dignity), raised high.

إِنَّا أَنشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنشَاء (٣٥)

35. **We have created** (their Companions) of special creation.

C5240. The pronoun in Arabic is in the feminine gender.

It is made clear that these maidens for heavenly society will be of special creation,-of virginal purity, grace, and beauty, inspiring and inspired by love, with the question of time and age eliminated. Thus every person among the righteous will have the Bliss of Heaven and the peace of Allah.

فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا (٣٦)

36. And made them virgin-pure (and undefiled)

عُرُبًا أَتْرَابًا (٣٧)

37. Beloved (by nature), equal in age --

لِّأَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٣٨)

38. For the companions of the Right Hand.

Section 2

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٩)

39. A (goodly) number from those of old,

C5241. This class-the righteous-will be a large company in Heaven, belonging to all the ages of the world. Cf. n. 5228 to 56:13 above.

Such is the unbounded Bounty of Allah.

وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ (٤٠)

40. And a (goodly) number from those of later times.

وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ (٤١)

41. The Companions of the Left Hand - -
what will be the Companions of the Left Hand?

فِي سَمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ (٤٢)

42. (They will be) in the midst of a fierce Blast of Fire and in Boiling Water,

C5242. Notice the parallelism in the contrast between those in Bliss and those in Misery. The description in each case pursues the idea of contrast. The fierce Blast of Fire and the Boiling Water are in contrast to the happy Lote-tree and the flowers and fruits in verses 28-29 above.

وَظِلٍّ مِّن يَحْمُومٍ (٤٣)

43. And in the shades of Black Smoke:

C5243. Even the Shades get a different quality in the Abode of Misery: shades of black smoke in contrast to the cool and refreshing long extended shades of trees by brooks in verses 30-31 above.

لَّا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ (٤٤)

44. Nothing (will there be) to refresh, nor to please:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَٰلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ (٤٥)

45. For that they were wont to be indulged, before that, in wealth (and luxury).

C5244. Cf. 34:34, and 43:23.

We must read verses 45-46 together. They had wealth and the good things of life, but they used them in self-indulgence and shameless crime, and now they are in humiliation.

وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ الْعَظِيمِ (٤٦)

46. And persisted obstinately in wickedness supreme!

C5244a. Wickedness supreme: i.e. their associating others with Allah in His divinity. [Eds.]

وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ أَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا ...

47. And they used to say,

"what! when we die and become dust and bones,

C5245. Their want of belief and ridicule of Allah's Message contrasts with the stern reality which they see around them now.

... أَئِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ (٤٧)

shall we then indeed be raised up again? --

أَوَ آبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ (٤٨)

48. "(We) and our fathers of old?"

قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ (٤٩)

49. Say: "Yea, those of old and those of later times,

لَمَجْمُوعُونَ إِلَى مِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (٥٠)

50. "All will certainly be gathered together for the meeting appointed for a Day Well-known.

C5246. In 26:38 (see n. 3159) the phrase "a day well-known" is used for a solemn day of festival, when the multitude of people gather together.

The Day of Judgment is such a day in the supreme sense of the word.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَيُّهَا الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكَذِّبُونَ (٥١)

51. "Then will ye truly, o ye that go wrong, and treat (Truth) as Falsehood!

لَآكِلُونَ مِن شَجَرٍ مِّن زَقُّومٍ (٥٢)

52. "Ye will surely taste of the Tree of Zaqqum.

C5247. This is the Cursed Tree mentioned in 17:60, where see n. 2250.

Cf. also 37:62, n. 4072; and 44:43-46 and n. 4722.

فَمَالِؤُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ (٥٣)

53. "Then will ye fill your insides therewith,

فَشَارِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ (٥٤)

54. "And drink Boiling Water on top of it:

فَشَارِبُونَ شُرْبَ الْهِيمِ (٥٥)

55. "Indeed ye shall drink like diseased camels raging with thirst!

هَذَا نُزُلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (٥٦)

56. Such will be their entertainment on the Day of Requital!

C.235 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(56:57-96)

Learn you then to witness the Truth in your lives.
Your own creation and growth, the seeds
That ye sow in the ground, the Circuit of Water
Through streams, rivers, and seas, to vapour,
Clouds, and rain that feeds the streams,
The Fire that stands as an emblem of Life
And Light-all point to your Lord Supreme.
His Revelation conveys the same Message
To the pure in heart. Will ye receive it
And live, assured of the truth of the Hereafter?
Glory and Praise to Allah the Beneficent,
Supreme to Justice, Mercy, and Truth!

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ (٥٧)

57. It is We Who have created you: **why will ye** not witness the Truth?

C5249. Man is apt to forget his Creator, and even the fact that he, man, is a created being. The seed of his body, out of which his physical life starts, is not created by man, but by Allah in the process of the unfoldment of the world. Why will not man recognise and bear witness of this fact by a life of obedience to Allah's Law?

أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تُمْنُونَ (٥٨)

58. Do ye then see? -- the (human seed) -- that ye throw out, --

أَأَنتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ (٥٩)

59. Is it ye who create it, or are We the Creators?

نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ ...

60. We have decreed Death to be your common lot,

C5250. Just as Allah has created this life that we see, so He has decreed that Death should be the common lot of all of us. Surely, if He can thus give life and death, as we see it, why should we refuse to believe that He can give us other forms when this life is over?

The Future Life, though indicated by what we know now, is to be on a wholly different plane. (R).

... وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ (٦٠)

and We are not to be frustrated

عَلَى أَن نُّبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٦١)

61. From changing your Forms and creating you (again) in (Forms) that ye know not.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْأَةَ الْأُولَى فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٦٢)

62. And ye certainly know already the first form of creation:
why then do ye not celebrate His praises?

أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ (٦٣)

63. See ye the **seed that** ye sow in the ground?

C5251. Having appealed to our own nature within us, He appeals now to the external nature around us, which should be evidence to us

- of His loving care for us, and
- of its being due to causes other than those which we produce and control.

Three examples are given :

- the seed which we sow in the soil; it is Allah's processes in nature, which make it grow;

- the water which we drink; it is Allah's processes in nature, that send it down from the clouds as rain, and distribute it through springs and rivers:
- the fire which we strike; it is again a proof of Allah's Plan and Wisdom in nature.

أَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ (٦٤)

64. Is it ye that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause?

لَوْ نَشَاء لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ (٦٥)

65. Were it Our Will, we could crumble it to dry powder, and ye would be left in wonderment,

إِنَّا لَمُغْرَمُونَ (٦٦)

66. (Saying), "We are indeed left with debts (for nothing):

C5252. The cultivator contracts debts for seed and gives labour for ploughing, sowing, watering, and weeding, in the hope of reaping a harvest.

Should he not give thanks to Allah when his harvest is in?

بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ (٦٧)

67. "Indeed are we shut out (of the fruits of our labor)."

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاء الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ (٦٨)

68. See ye the water which ye drink?

أَأَنتُمْ أَنزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ (٦٩)

69. Do ye bring it Down (in rain) from the Cloud, or do We?

لَوْ نَشَاء جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا ...

70. Were it Our Will, We could make it salt (and unpalatable):

C5253. The mystery of the two streams of water, one sweet and the other salt, constantly mingling, and yet always separate, is referred to more than once.

The never-ending circuit is established by streams and rivers mingling with the ocean, the ocean sending forth

mists and steam through a process of evaporation which forms clouds, and the clouds by condensation pouring forth rain to feed the streams and rivers again: see notes 3111-2 to 25:53, and n. 5185 to 55:19, and the further references given there.

... فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٠)

then why do ye not give thanks?

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ (٧١)

71. See ye the Fire which ye kindle?

... أَأَنتُمْ أَنشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا

72. Is it ye who grow the tree which feeds the fire,

C5254. The relation of Fire to Trees is intimate. In nearly all the fire that we burn, the fuel is derived from the wood of trees. Even mineral coal is nothing but the wood of prehistoric forests petrified under the earth through geological ages. Fire produced out of green trees is referred to in 36:80; and n. 4026 there gives instances.

... أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنشِؤُونَ (٧٢)

or do We grow it?

... نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذْكِرَةً

73. We have made it a memorial (of our handiwork),

C5255. Fire is a fit memorial of Allah's handiwork in nature. It is also an emblem of man’s earliest civilization. It can stand as a symbol of physical comfort and convenience to man, of the source of spiritual light, and also of the warning to Evil about the destruction.

In the same way the sower’s seed has a symbolical meaning in the preaching of the Message: see 48:29, and n. 4917:

and the Rain and the Streams of Water have a symbolical meaning; see notes 2404 - 2405 t0 18::60.

وَمَتَٰعًا لِّلْمُقْوِينَ (٧٣) ...

and an article of comfort and convenience for the denizens of deserts.

C5256. Cf. 20:10 and n. 2541, where the mystic meaning of the Fire which Moses saw in the desert is explained.

Even ordinarily, a fire in a desert is a sign of human habitation; by following it you may get human society and human comfort.

A fire, or light, or beacon in many places directs a traveler or the way. Lighthouses at sea and beacons in modem aerodromes serve the same purpose for mariners and airmen.

Another parable about fire will be found in 2:17-18, and n. 38.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٧٤)

74. Then celebrate with **praises** the name of the Lord, the Supreme:

C5257. Seeing all these Signs in nature man must turn to Allah and do His Will.

Section 3

فَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ (٧٥)

75. Furthermore I call to witness the **setting** of the Stars --

C5258. The setting of the Stars; a number of mystic meanings are attached. Here are three.

- Cf. 53:1 and n. 5085; the setting of a glorious star is a symbol of humility before the power, beauty, and goodness of Allah.
- It may refer to the extinction of the stars at the Day of Judgement, betokening the establishment of Allah's Justice and the Truth of His Revelation.
- What is bright or beautiful to our senses may disappear from our ken within a few hours, even though its own existence may continue. All light is relative except the Light of Allah.

وَإِنَّهُ لَقَسَمٌ لَّوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ (٧٦)

76. And that is **indeed a mighty adjuration** if ye but knew --

C5259. The glory of the firmament as it exists, and the wonder of its passing away, are both evidence, to the discerning mind, of the Future which Allah has prepared, but this evidence can only be effective if men but knew, i.e.., turned their earnest attention to it.

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ (٧٧)

77. That this is indeed a Qur'án most honorable,

C5260. Your attention is drawn to the momentous issues of the Future by the Quran . It is a Revelation described by four characteristics.

- It is most honourable, *karim*, which implies, besides the fact that it is worthy of receiving honour, that it confers great favours on those who receive it.
- It is well-guarded, *maknun*; precious in itself, and well- preserved in its purity; see n. 5234 to 56:23; see also 15:9, and n. 1944.
- None but the clean shall touch it,-dean in body, mind, thought, intention, and soul; only such can achieve real contact with its full meaning.
- It is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds, and therefore universal for all.

فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ (٧٨)

78. In a Book well-guarded,

لَّا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (٧٩)

79. Which none shall touch but those who are clean:

تَنزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٨٠)

80. A Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَفَبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَنتُم مُّدْهِنُونَ (٨١)

81. Is it such a Message that ye would **hold** in light esteem?

C5261. The Message being such as is described in the last note, how can any one ignore it or treat it with contempt or refuse to allow it to improve his life?

وَتَجْعَلُونَ رِزْقَكُمْ أَنَّكُمْ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٨٢)

82. **And have ye made it** your livelihood that ye should declare it false?

C5262. The worst indictment of an enemy of Revelation would be that he should make Falsehood a source of filthy lucre for himself, or that he should let his precious life be corrupted by such unholy occupation.

فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلْقُومَ (٨٣)

83. Then **why do ye not** (intervene) when (the soul of the dying man) reaches the throat --

C5263. There is a hiatus after **"why do ye not?"**-and two parenthetical clauses, -after which the clause **"why do ye not?"** is resumed again in verse 86 below, with its complement in verse 87. It is permissible to the translator to add some such word as "intervene" here, to make the translation run smoothly.

وَأَنتُمْ حِينَئِذٍ تَنظُرُونَ (٨٤)

84. And ye the while (sit) looking on --

C5264. The dying man's friends, relatives, and companions may be sitting round him and quite close to him in his last moments, but Allah is nearer still at all times for He is nearer than the man's own jugular vein (50:16), and one of Allah's own titles is "Ever Near" (34:50).

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنكُمْ وَلَكِن لَّا تُبْصِرُونَ (٨٥)

85. But We are nearer to him than ye, and yet see not --

فَلَوْلَا إِن كُنتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ (٨٦)

86. **Then why do you not** -- if you are exempt from (future) account --

C5265. These words resume the sentence begun at verse 83 above and interrupted by the two parenthetical clauses in verses 84 and 85. See n. 5263 above.

تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٨٧)

87. **Call back the soul**, if ye are true (in your claim of Independence)?

C5266. The sentence may now be briefly paraphrased. 'If you disbelieve in Revelation and a future Judgment, and claim to do what you like and be independent of Allah, how is it you cannot call back a dying man's soul to his body when all of you congregate round him at his death-bed? But you are not independent of Judgment. There is a Day of Account, when you will have to be judged by your deeds in this life.'

فَأَمَّا إِن كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (٨٨)

88. Thus, then, if he be of those Nearest to Allah,

C5267. See above. 56:11-26 and notes.

فَرَوْحٌ وَرَيْحَانٌ وَجَنَّةُ نَعِيمٍ (٨٩)

89. (There is for him) Rest and Satisfaction, and a Garden of Delights.

C5268. Rayhan: sweet-smelling plants, as in 55:12. Here used as an indication of Satisfaction and Delight.

وَأَمَّا إِن كَانَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٩٠)

90. And if he be of the Companions of the Right Hand,

C5269. See above, 56:27-38 and notes.

فَسَلَامٌ لَّكَ ...

91. (For him is the salutation), "Peace be unto thee,"

C5270. In 56:26 above the salutation of "Peace, Peace!" is addressed to those Nearest to Allah. Here we learn that it is also addressed to the Companions of the Right Hand. Both are in Gardens of Bliss; only the former have a higher Dignity than the latter.

مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ (٩١) ...

from the Companions of the Right Hand.

وَأَمَّا إِن كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ (٩٢)

92. And if he be of those who treat (truth) as **Falsehood**, who go wrong,

C5271. Cf. above, 56:51-55.

فَنُزُلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ (٩٣)

93. For him is Entertainment with Boiling Water.

وَتَصْلِيَةُ جَحِيمٍ (٩٤)

94. And burning in Hell-fire.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (٩٥)

95. Verily, this is the Very Truth and Certainty.

C5272. "The assurance of the Hereafter" is one of the strongest features of Faith. For without it the apparent inequalities and injustices of this Life cannot be satisfactorily explained.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٩٦)

96. So celebrate with praises the name of thy Lord, the Supreme.

C5273. Cf. 56:74 above.

That was the conclusion of the argument about the Future from the examples of Allah's goodness in nature. Now we have the conclusion of the same argument from Allah's revelation through His inspired Messengers.

وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

For Allah loveth not any vainglorious boaster --

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Hadid

الْحَدِيدَ

Introduction and Summary

We have now studied the contents of nearly nine-tenth of the Quran. We have found that the arrangement of Surahs in the present Text is not haphazard, but that they follow a distinct logical order more helpful for study than the chronological order, The comprehensive scheme of building up the new Ummah or Brotherhood and its spiritual implications is now complete. The remaining tenth of the Quran may be roughly considered in two parts.

- The first contains ten Surahs (Surah 57 to Surah 66), all revealed in Madinah, and each dealing with some special point which needs emphasis in the social life of Ummah.

- The second (Surah 67 t0 94) contains short Makkan lyrics, each dealing with some aspect of spiritual life, expressed in language of great mystic beauty.

The present Madinah Surah is chiefly concerned with spiritual humility and the avoidance, and a warning that retirement from the world may not be the best way of seeking the good pleasure of Allah. Its probable date is after the Conquest of Makkah, A.H. 8.

Summary- Allah's Power and Knowledge extend to all things; follow His light direct, without doubt or fear or half-heartedness, but with humility, generous charity, and faith, and not in a life of isolation from the world. (57:1-29, and C. 236).

C.236 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Allah is All-in-All: follow His Law
And His Light, and obey His Prophet, who invites
You to deeds of goodness and charity.
Strive and spend your resources and yourselves
In the Cause of Allah; He will grant you a Light
To go before you and guide you to your Eternal
Goal, where no Evil can enter. When success
Crowns your efforts, even then is the time
To humble yourselves before Allah, in sincere
Witness to His love. The pleasure here below
Are deceptive: be foremost in seeking Allah
And His Good Pleasure: trust Him: be not
Like those who mistook mere renunciation
Of the world for Allah's service. Allah's Grace
Is for all: be your love and your service for all.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah:

C5275. A connecting thought between this and the last Surah, of which see verse 96.

See also paragraph 3 of the Introduction to Surah 53.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١)

for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ...

2. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; it is He Who gives life and Death;

وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٢)

and He has Power over all things.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ...

3. He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden:

C5276. Allah is Evident in so far as there is ample evidence of His existence and providence all around us. On the other hand, Allah is Hidden in so far as intellect cannot grasp His essence nor can He be seen in the present world.

The following tradition in Sahih Muslim is also significant for an understanding of this verse.

The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

> "Thou art the First, so that there was nothing before Thee;
>
> and Thou art the Last, so that there is nothing after Thee;

and Thou art Evident, (or Ascendant) so that there is nothing above Thee,

and Thou art the the Hidden, the Knower of hidden things, so that there is nothing hidden from Thee." [Eds.]

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٣)

and He has full knowledge of all things.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ...

4. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days,

C5277. "In six Days": see 41:9-12, and notes;

also more briefly, n. 1031 to 7:54.

... ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ...

and is moreover firmly established on the Throne (of authority).

C5278. Cf. 10:3, and n. 1386.

It is not that Allah completed His Creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, or rests now.

Certain external forms of the universe were by Allah's Command completed in six periods of evolution. But His creative process still goes on, and He is still, and will always be, in full control, knowing all and guiding all affairs. (R).

...يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ

وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا...

He knows what enters within the earth and what comes forth out of it, what comes down from heaven and what mounts up to it.

...وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ ...

And He is with you wheresoever ye may be.

C5279. Allah watches over man and observes his deeds. His knowledge comprehends all, the earth, heavens, what is in them or above them or whatever is in between

them, comes out of them or goes into them, for "not a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge", and "there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is inscribed in a Record". (6:59). [Eds.].

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٤)

And Allah sees well all that ye do.

... لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

5. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth:

C5280. See 57:2 above, where this phrase referred to Allah's complete authority over the whole of the external universe:

the same phrase now refers to His complete authority over the abstract world-of thoughts and affairs. Every affair must finally go back to Him, whether it comes out here from Darkness into Light, or hides itself from Light into Darkness. Allah's knowledge penetrates into the inmost recesses of all Hearts.

... وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الأُمُورُ (٥)

and all affairs are referred back to Allah.

... يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ

6. He merges Night into Day, and He merges Day into Night;

...وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٦)

and He has full knowledge of the secrets of (all) hearts.

... آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُم مُّسْتَخْلَفِينَ فِيهِ

7. Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend (in charity) out of the (substance) whereof He has made you heirs.

C5281. Whenever power or wealth or influence or any good thing is transferred from one person or group of persons to another, it involves added responsibilities to the persons receiving these advantages. They must be

the more zealous in real charity and all good works, for that is a part of the evidence which they give of their faith and gratitude. And, besides, their good deeds carry their own reward.

... فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَأَنفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (٧)

For, those of you who believe and spend (in charity) -- for them is a great Reward.

... وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

8. What cause have ye why ye should not believe in Allah? --

C5282. "What cause have ye why should not..." A figure of speech implying a far wider meaning than the words express. It is equivalent to saying: "There is every reason why ye should believe in Allah", etc. The same construction applies to verse 10 below.

... وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ أَخَذَ مِيثَاقَكُمْ

And the Messenger invites you to believe in your Lord, and has indeed taken your Covenant,

C5283. There are two shades of meaning.

- There is the implied Covenant in a man who accepts the Gospel of Unity that he will bring forth all the fruits of that Gospel, i.e., believe in Allah, and serve Allah and humanity. See n. 682 to 5:1.
- There were at various times express Covenants entered into by the Muslims to serve Allah and be true to the Prophet, comparable to the Covenants of the Jewish nation about the Message of Moses; e.g., the two Covenants of 'Aqaba (5:8, and n. 705) and the Pledge of Hudaybiyah (48:10, n. 4877).

  For the Covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, see. 2:63, n. 78.

... إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ (٨)

if ye are men of faith.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ...

9. He is the One Who Sends **to His Servants** manifest Signs, that He may lead you from the depths of Darkness into the Light.

C5284. The Holy Prophet Muhammad.

The Signs sent to him were:

- the Ayats of the Quran, and
- his life and work, in which Allah's Plan and Purpose were unfolded.

... وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٩)

And verily, Allah is to you Most Kind and Merciful.

وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تُنفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

10. And what cause have ye why ye should not spend in the Cause of Allah? -- For to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth.

C5285. "To Allah belongs the heritage of... ":

see n. 485 to 3:180; also n. 988 to 6:165; and n. 1964 to 15:23.

...لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنكُم مَّنْ أَنفَقَ مِن قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ...

Not equal among you are those who spent (freely) and fought, before the Victory, (with those who did so later).

C5286. This is usually understood to refer to the Conquest of Makkah, after which the Muslims succeeded to the power and position which the Pagan Quraish had so misused at Makkah. Thereafter the Muslims had the hegemony of Arabia, and in a few centuries, for a time, the hegemony of the world.

But the words are perfectly general, and we must understand the general meaning also: that the people who fight and struggle in Allah's Cause and give of their best to it at any time are worthy of praise: but those are worthy of special distinction who do it when the Cause is being persecuted and in most need of assistance, before victory comes.

...أُوْلَئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنفَقُوا مِن بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوا وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى...

Those are higher in rank than those who spent (freely) and fought afterwards. But to all has Allah promised a goodly (reward),

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١٠)

and Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

Section 2

... مَن ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا

11. Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful Loan?

C528. Cf. 2:245, n. 276.

... فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١١)

For (Allah) will increase it manifold to his credit, and he will have (besides) a liberal reward.

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُم بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِم...

12. One Day shalt thou see the believing men and the believing women how their Light runs forward before them and by their right hands:

C5288. In the Darkness of the Day of Judgment there will be a Light to guide the righteous to their Destination. This will be the Light of their Faith and their Good

Works: for the Blessed will receive their Record in their right hand (69:19-24).

...بُشْرَاكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

(their greeting will be): "Good News for you this Day!

Gardens beneath which flow rivers! To dwell therein for aye!

... ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٢)

this is indeed the highest Achievement!"

C5289. The highest Achievement, the highest felicity, the attainment of Salvation, the fulfilment of all desires.

See n. 4733 to 44:57.

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِن نُّورِكُمْ...

13. One day will the Hypocrites -- men and women -- say to the Believers:

"Wait for us! let us borrow (a light) from your Light!"

C5290. Watchful preparation in Life, and the light of Faith, which reflects the divine Light, are matters of personal Life, and cannot be borrowed from another.

So, in Christ's parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), when the foolish ones had let their lamps go out for want of oil, they asked to borrow oil from the wise ones, but the wise ones answered and said, "Not so; ... but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves".

...قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا...

It will be said:

"turn ye back to your rear! then seek a light (where ye can)!"

... فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُم بِسُورٍ لَّهُ بَابٌ ...

So a wall will be put up betwixt them, with a gate therein.

C5291. The wall will divide the Good from the Evil. But the Gateway in it will show that communication will not be cut off. Evil must realise that Good- i.e.., Mercy and Felicity-had been within its reach, and that the Wrath which envelops it is due to its own rejection of Mercy.

... بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِن قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ (١٣)

Within it will be Mercy throughout, and without it, all alongside, will be (wrath and) Punishment!

يُنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُن مَّعَكُمْ...

14. (Those without) will call out, "were we not with you?"

C5292. The evil will now claim some right of kinship or association or proximity with the good in earthly life; but in fact they had been arrogant and had selfishly despised them before. The reply will be:

- you yourselves chose temptation and evil;
- when you had power in your earthly life, you hoped for ruin to the good, and perhaps plotted for it;
- you were warned by prophets of Allah, but you doubted Allah's very existence and certainly Ms Mercy and Justice, and the Hereafter;
- you followed your own lusts and neglected Reason and Truth;
- you were given plenty of rope, but you followed your mad career, until Judgment came upon you, and now it is too late for repentance.

...قَالُوا بَلَى وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنتُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْأَمَانِيُّ...

(The others) will reply,

"True! but ye led yourselves into temptation; ye looked forward (to our ruin); ye doubted (Allah's promise); and (your false) desires deceived you;

...حَتَّى جَاء أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَغَرَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغَرُورُ (١٤)

until there issued the Command of Allah. And the Deceiver deceived you in respect of Allah.

C5293. The Arch-Deceiver (Satan) deceived you in respect of Allah in many ways: for example,

- he made you oblivious of Allah's Mercy and loving-kindness;

- he made you reject His Grace;
- he made you think that Allah's Justice may not overtake you; etc.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

15. "This Day shall no ransom be accepted of you, nor of those who rejected Allah.

C5294. In personal responsibility there is no room for vicarious ransom or for ransom by payments of gold or silver or by sacrifice of possessions. Nor can the crime be expiated for after Judgment. 'You' and 'those who rejected Allah' are two ways of looking at the same persons. 'You are rejected because you rejected Allah.'

مَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ هِيَ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٥)

Your abode is the fire: That is the proper place to claim you: and an evil refuge it is!"

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

16. Has not the time arrived for the Believers ...

C5295. Humility and the remembrance of Allah and His Message are never more necessary than in the hour of victory and prosperity.

... أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ...

... that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the truth which has been revealed (to them),

...وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلُ ...

and that they should not become like those to whom was given Revelation aforetime,

C5296. The men immediately referred to are the contemporary Jews and Christians. To each of these Ummahs was given Allah's Revelation, but as time passed, they corrupted it, became arrogant and hard-

hearted, and subverted justice, truth, and the purity of Life.

But the general lesson is far wider. No one is favoured of Allah except on the score of righteousness. Except on that score, there is no chosen individual or race. There is no blind good fortune or ill fortune. All happens according to the just laws and Will of Allah. But at no time is humility or righteousness more necessary than in the hour of victory or triumph.

... فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ...

but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard?

وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (١٦)

For many among them are rebellious transgressors.

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا...

17. Know ye (all) that Allah giveth life to the earth after its death!

C5297. As the dead earth is revived after the refreshing showers of rain, so is it with the spirit of man, whether as an individual or a race or Ummah. There is no cause for despair. Allah's Truth will revive the spiritual faculties if it is accepted with humility and zeal.

...قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (١٧)

already have We shown the Signs plainly to you, that ye may learn wisdom.

إِنَّ الْمُصَّدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَّدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا...

18. For those who give in Charity, men and women, and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan,

C5298. Cf. 57:11;

also see 2:245, n. 276.

...يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ (١٨)

it shall be increased manifold (to their credit), and they shall have (besides) a liberal reward.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيقُونَ...

19. And those who believe in Allah and His messengers -- they are the Sincere (Lovers of truth),

C5299. Cf. 4:69, and n. 586.

The four categories there mentioned as constituting the beautiful Company of Faith are:

- the Prophets who teach, the Sincere Lovers of Truth,
- the Martyrs, and
- the Righteous who do good.

Of these, the prophets or messengers have already been mentioned in this verse. The Righteous who do good are mentioned as the men and women given over to deeds of charity in verse 18.

...وَالشُّهَدَاء ...

and the witnesses (who testify),

C5300.

- The Witnesses are not only Martyrs, but all those who carry the Banner of Truth against all odds and in all positions of danger, whether by pen or speech, or deed or counsel.

... عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ وَنُورُهُمْ...

in the eyes of their Lord: they shall have their Reward and their Light,

C5301. Note that these two are specially high degrees in the Hereafter, just short of Prophethood. For they have not only their reward in the Hereafter, like those who practice charity (verse 18 above), but they themselves become sources of light and leading.

...وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُوْلَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ (١٩)

but those who reject Allah and deny Our Signs -- they are the Companions of Hell-Fire.

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَزِينَةٌ ...

20. Know ye (all), that the life of this world is but play and amusement,

C5302. Cf. 6:32, and n. 855.

In the present passage the idea is further amplified. In this life people not only play and amuse themselves and each other, but they show off, and boast, and pile up riches and man-power and influence, in rivalry with each other.

...وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ...

pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children:

...كَمَثَلِ ...

Here is a similitude:

C5303. Cf. 39:21, and n. 4273.

Here the Parable is meant to teach a slightly different lesson. Allah's mercies are free and open to all, like His rain. But how do men make use of them? The good men take the real spiritual harvest and store the Spiritual grain. The men who are in love with the ephemeral are delighted with the green of the tares and the grass; but such things give no real nourishment; they soon wither, become dry, and crumble to pieces, like the worldly pleasures and pomps, boasting and tumults, possessions and friends.

...غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ...

How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers;

C5304. Kuffar is here used in the unusual sense of 'tillers or husbandmen', because they sow the seed and cover it up with soil.

But the ordinary meaning, 'Rejecters of Truth', is not absent. The allegory refers to such men.

...فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَامًا...

soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry and crumbles away.

...وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ...

But in the Hereafter is a Penalty severe (for the devotees of wrong), and Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the devotees of Allah).

...وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ (٢٠)

And what is the life of this world, but goods and chattels of deception?

C5305. Cf. 3:185, and n. 492.

Many of the attractive vanities of this world are but nets set by Satan to deceive man. The only thing real and lasting is the Good Life lived in the Light of Allah.

سَابِقُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ

وَالْأَرْضِ...

21. Be ye foremost (in seeking) forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of Bliss), the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth,

C5306. Cf. 3:133, and n. 452.

...أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ...

prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers:

...ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ...

that is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He pleases:

C5307. "Bestows on whom He pleases." That is, such grace and favour is beyond any one's own merits. It is bestowed by Allah according to His holy Will and Plan, which is just, merciful, and righteous.

... وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢١)

and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.

مَا أَصَابَ مِن مُّصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ ...

22. No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls,

C5308. External disasters or misfortunes may strike people's eye or imagination, but there are worse crisis and misfortunes in the spiritual world, which are of equal or greater importance to man's future. All this happens according to the Will and Plan of Allah. Even where we are allowed the exercise of our own wills, the consequences that follow are in accordance with the laws and Plan decreed by Allah beforehand.

... إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن نَّبْرَأَهَا...

but is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence:

C5309. For **bara'a,** 'to bring into existence', and other words denoting Allah's creative energy, see n. 120 to 2:117; n. 916 to 6:94; and n. 923 to 6:98.

إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (٢٢)

that is truly easy for Allah:

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ...

23. In order that ye may not despair over matters that pass you by, nor exult over favors bestowed upon you.

...وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (٢٣)

For Allah loveth not any vainglorious boaster --

C5310. In the external world, what people may consider misfortune or good fortune may both turn out to be illusory,-in Kipling's words, "both imposters just the same". The righteous man does not grumble if some one else has possessions, nor exult if he has them. He does not covet and he does not boast. If he has any advantages, he shares them with other people, as he considers them not due to his own merits, but as gifts of Allah. (R).

الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ ...

24. Such persons as are covetous and commend covetousness to men.

C5311. Neither the Covetous nor the Boasters have any place in the Good Pleasure of Allah. The Covetous are particularly insidious, as their avarice and niggardliness not only keep back the gifts of Allah from men, but their pernicious example dries up the streams of Charity in others.

... وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٢٤)

And if any turn back (from Allah's Way), verily Allah is free of all needs, worthy of all praise.

C5312. It is Charity in Allah's Way that is specially in view here. If people are selfish and withhold their hand, they only injure themselves, They do not hurt Allah's Cause, for He is independent of all needs, and He will find other means of assisting His more meagerly-endowed servants; He is worthy of all praise in His care for His creatures.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ...

25. We sent aforetime our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice;

C5313. Three things are mentioned as gifts of Allah. In concrete terms they are;

- the Book,
- the Balance, and
- Iron,

which stand as emblems of three things which hold society together, viz.

- Revelation, which commands Good and forbids Evil;
- Justice, which gives to each person his due;
- and the strong arm of the Law, which maintains sanctions for evil-doers.

For Balance, see also 42:17, and n. 4550.

...وَأَنزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ ...

and We sent down Iron,

C5314. "Sent down": **anzala**:

in the sense of revealed to man the use of certain things, created in him the capacity of understanding and using them: cf. 39:6: "sent down for you eight head of cattle in pairs".

... فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ...

in which is (material for) mighty war, as well as many benefits for mankind,

C5315. Iron: the most useful metal known to man. Out of it is made steel, and from steel and iron are made implements of war, such as swords, spears, guns, etc., as well as instruments of peace, such as ploughshares, bricklayers' trowels, architects' and engineers' instruments, etc.

Iron stands as the emblem of Strength, Power, Discipline, Law's sanctions, etc. Iron and steel industries have also been the foundation of the prosperity and power of modem manufacturing nations'. (R).

...وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ...

that Allah may test who it is that will help, unseen Him and His messengers;

C5316. In 21:49, I have translated "in their most secret thoughts" for the more literal "unseen" (bilgaibi). Perhaps the more literal "unseen" may do if understood in the adverbial sense; as explained in 35:18, n. 3902.

The sincere man will help the Cause, whether he is seen or brought under notice or not.

C5317. To help Allah and His messengers is to help their Cause. It is to give men an opportunity of striving and fighting for His Cause and proving their true mettle, for thus is their spirit tested.

As explained in the next line, Allah in Himself is Full of Strength, Exalted in Power, and Able to enforce His Will, and He has no need of others' assistance.

...إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٢٥)

for Allah is Full of Strength, exalted in Might (and able to enforce His will).

C5318. Cf. 22:40 and n. 2818.

"Strength" is specific: Power or Might is more abstract, the ability to enforce what is willed.

Section 4

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ...

26. And We sent Noah and Abraham, and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation:

...فَمِنْهُم مُّهْتَدٍ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٦)

and some of them were on right guidance, but many of them became rebellious transgressors.

C5319. Some of them: i.e., of their line, or posterity, or Ummah. When the Book that was given to them became corrupted, many of them followed their own fancies and became transgressors.

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ...

27. Then, in their wake, We followed them up with (others of) Our messengers: We sent after them Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel;

...وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً...

and We ordained in the hearts of those who followed him Compassion and Mercy.

C5320. The chief characteristic of the teaching in the Gospels is humility and other- worldliness.

The first blessings in the Sermon on the Mount are on "the poor in spirit", "they that mourn", and they that are "meek" (Matt. 5:3-5).

Christ's disciples were enjoined to "take no thought for the morrow", and told "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34).

They were also commanded "that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39).

These are fragmentary presentments of an imperfect philosophy as seen through monastic eyes. In so far as they represent pity, sympathy with suffering, and deeds of mercy, they represent the spirit of Christ.

...وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ ...

But the monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them:

C5321. But Allah's Kingdom requires also courage, resistance to evil, the firmness, law, and discipline which will enforce justice among men. It requires men to mingle with men, so that they can uphold the. standard of Truth, against odds if necessary. These were lost sight of in Monasticism, which was not prescribed by Allah.

... إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ...

(We commanded) only the seeking for the Good pleasure of Allah;

...فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا...

but that they did not foster as they should have done.

C5322. Allah certainly requires that men shall renounce the idle pleasures of this world, and turn to the Path

which leads to Allah's Good Pleasure. But that does not mean gloomy fives, ("they that mourn"), nor perpetual and formal prayers in isolation. Allah's service is done through pure lives in the turmoil of this world. This spirit was lost, or at least not fostered by monastic institutions. On the contrary a great part of the "struggle and striving" for noble lives was suppressed.

... فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ ...

Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) reward,

C5323. Many of them lost true Faith, or had their Faith corrupted by superstitions. But those who continued firm in Faith saw the natural development of Religion in Islam. Their previous belief was not a disadvantage to them, but helped them, because they kept it free from false and selfish prejudices. These are the ones who are further addressed at the beginning of verse 28 below.

... وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٢٧)

but many of them are rebellious transgressors.

C5324. The corruptions in the Christian Church, the hair-splitting disputes, and mutual strife and hatred of sects had become a scandal by the time that the light of Islam came into the world. The pages of Gibbon's great History bear witness. Not only had the religion become void of grace, but the lives of the people, priests and laity, had fallen into great depths of degradation.

See remarks in my Appendix V, and the general picture in Kingsley's Hypatia.

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

28. O ye that believe!

C5325. From the context before (see n. 5323 above) and after (see next note), this is held to refer to the Christians and People of the Book who kept their Faith true and undefiled.

... اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ...

fear Allah, and believe in His messenger,

...يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِن رَّحْمَتِهِ ...

and He will bestow on you a **double portion** of His Mercy:

C5326. The double portion refers to the past and the future.

As noted in the last note, this passage is addressed to the Christians and the People of the Book, who, when honestly facing the question of the new Revelation in Islam, find in it the fulfilment of previous revelations, and therefore believe in Allah's Messenger Muhammad, and walk by the new light. Their previous merits will be duly recognised, and they will be treated on fully equal terms in the new Ummah. This is their double share, not necessarily more in quantity than that of their brethren in Islam who passed through no other gate, but having a twofold aspect.

... وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ ...

He will provide for you a light by which ye shall walk (straight in your path),

C5327. As this refers to the Christians and the People of the Book, the following saying of Christ in his last days may interest them:

"'Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you... While ye have the fight, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them". (John, 12:35-36).

The light of Christ's Gospel soon departed; his Church was enveloped in darkness; then came the fight again, in the fuller light of Islam. And they are asked to believe in the light, and to walk in it. Cf. also 57:12. and n. 5288 above.

... وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ...

and He will forgive you (your past):

C5328. Any wrong they may have committed through ignorance or misconceptions in their previous religion will be forgiven them, as they have seen the new light and walk by it.

...وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٨)

For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful:

لِئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَلَّا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ...

29. That the People of the Book may know that they have no power whatever over the Grace of Allah,

C5329. Let not any race, or people, or community, or group, believe that they have exclusive possession of Allah's Grace, or that they can influence its grant or its withholding.

Allah's Grace is free, and entirely controlled by Him, independently of any priests and privileged people. He dispenses it according to His own wise and holy Will and Plan; and to His Grace there is no limit.

...وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ...

that (His) Grace is (entirely) in His hand, to bestow it on whomsoever He wills.

...وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢٩)

For Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.

أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Truly it is the Party of Allah, that will achieve Felicity.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Mujadilah

المُجَادَلَتِه

Introduction and Summary

This is the second of the ten Madinah Surahs referred to in the Introduction to the last Surah. Its subject matter is the acceptance of a woman's Plea on behalf of herself and her children (see n. 5330 to 58:1 below), and a condemnation of all secret counsels and intrigues in the Muslim brotherhood.

The date is somewhat close to that of Surah 33, say between A.H. 5 and A.H. 7.

Summary- All false pretences, especially those that degrade a woman's position, are condemned---as well as secret

consultation between men and intrigues with falsehood, mischief, and sedition. (58:1-22, and C. 237).

C.237 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Let not false pretenses or superstitions
Degrade the position of women. Eschew
Secret plotting and secret counsels.
Observe order and decorum in public assemblies,
And seek not in selfish pride to engage
Your Leader's private attention, It is wrong
To turn to the enemies of Allah for friendship;
They make their oaths a cloak for wrongdoing,
And keep back men from the Right. But none
Can resist the Power or the Judgement of Allah.
The righteous seek only His Good Pleasure,
And rejoice therein as their highest Achievement.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِي تُجَادِلُكَ ...

1. Allah has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman ..

C5330. The immediate occasion was what happened to Khaula bint Thalaba, wife of Aus son of Samit. Though in Islam, he divorced her by an old Pagan custom: the formula was known as Zihar, and consisted of the words "Thou art to me as the back of my mother".

This was hold by Pagan custom to imply a divorce and freed the husband from any responsibility for conjugal duties. Such a custom was in any case degrading to a woman. It was particularly hard on Khaula, for she loved her husband and pleaded that she had little children whom she had no resources herself to support. She

urged her plea to the Prophet and in prayer to Allah. Her just plea was accepted, and this iniquitous custom, based on false words, was abolished.

See also n. 3670 to 33:4.

...فِي زَوْجِهَا وَتَشْتَكِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ...

.... who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to Allah:

...وَاللَّهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا ...

and Allah (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you:

C5331. For He is a just God, and will not allow human customs or pretences to trample on the just rights of the weakest of His creatures.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ (١)

for Allah hears and sees (all things).

الَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنكُم مِّن نِّسَائِهِم مَّا هُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِهِمْ ...

2. If any men among you divorce their wives by **Zihar** (calling them mothers), they cannot be their mothers:

C5332. See n. 5330 above.

...إِنْ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّائِي وَلَدْنَهُمْ ...

none can be their mothers except those who gave them birth.

...وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُولُونَ مُنكَرًا مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ وَزُورًا...

And in fact they use words (both) iniquitous and false:

C5333. Such words are false in fact and iniquitous, inasmuch as they are unfair to the wife and unseemly in decent society.

...وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُورٌ (٢)

but truly Allah is one that blots out (sins), and forgives (again and again).

C5334. Cf. 4:99 and 22:60.

Were it not that Allah in His Mercy makes allowances for our weaknesses and the various grades of motives that actuate us, such conduct would be inexpiable.

But He prescribes expiation as in the next verse, because He wishes to blot out what is wrong and give us a chance to reform by His forgiveness.

وَالَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِن نِّسَائِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا قَالُوا...

3. But those who divorce their wives by Zihar, then wish to go back on the words they uttered,

C5335. If Zihar were to be ignored as if the words were never uttered, it would mean that men may foolishly resort to it without penalty. It is therefore recognised in respect of the penalty which the man incurs, but safeguards the woman's rights. She can sue for maintenance for herself. If it was a hasty act and he repented of it, he could not claim his conjugal rights until after the performance of his penalty as provided below.

If she loved him, as Khawlah's case, she could also herself sue for conjugal rights in the legal sense of the term and compel her husband to perform the penalty and resume marital relations.

...فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَتَمَاسَّا ذَٰلِكُمْ تُوعَظُونَ بِهِ ...

(it is ordained that such a one) should free a slave before they touch each other: this are ye admonished to perform:

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٣)

and Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

فَمَن لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَتَمَاسَّا...

4. And if any has not (the wherewithal), he should fast for two months consecutively before they touch each other.

C5336. Cf. 4:92.

The penalty is: to get a slave his freedom, whether it is your own slave or you purchase his freedom from another; if that is not possible, to fast for two months

consecutively (in the manner of the Ramadan fast); if that is not possible, to feed sixty poor. See next note.

...فَمَن لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَإِطْعَامُ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا ...

But if any is unable to do so, he should feed sixty indigent ones.

C5337. There is a great deal of learned argument among the jurists as to the precise requirements of Canon Law under the term "feeding" the indigent.

For example, it is laid down that half a Sa' of wheat or a full Sa' of dates or their equivalent in money would fulfil the requirements, a Sa' being a measure corresponding roughly to about 9 lbs. of wheat in weight.

Others hold that a Mudd measure equivalent to about 2 1/4 lbs. would be sufficient. This would certainly be nearer the daily ration of a man.

It is better to take the spirit of the text in its plain simplicity, and say that an indigent man should be given enough to eat for two meals a day.

The sixty indigent ones fed for a day would be equivalent to a single individual fed for sixty days, or two for thirty days, and so on. But there is no need to go into minutiae in such matters.

... ذَٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ...

This, that ye may show your faith in Allah and His Messenger.

C5338. These penalties in the alternative are prescribed, that we may show our repentance and Faith and our renunciation of "iniquity and falsehood" (verse 2 above), whatever our circumstances may be.

...وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٤)

Those are limits (set by) Allah. For those who Reject (Him), there is a grievous Penalty.

C5339. It would seem that this refers to the spiritual Penalty in the Hereafter for not complying with the small penalty here prescribed. The next verse would then refer to the bigger "humiliating Penalty" for "resistance" to Allah's Law generally.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ كُبِتُوا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ...

5. Those who resist Allah and His Messenger will be humbled to dust, as were those before them:

...وَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ...

for We have already sent down clear Signs.

...وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (٥)

And the Unbelievers (will have) a humiliating Penalty,

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا...

6. On the Day that Allah will raise them all up (again) and show them the truth (and meaning) of their conduct.

C5340. This phrase, **"Allah will tell them of their deeds (or their doings or their conduct)"** occurs frequently. See 5:48, n. 762; (5:105), n. 811; 6:60; 9:94; etc.

In this life there is a certain mist or illusion in our spiritual sight. We see things from different angles and dispute about them; we hide real motives, and pretend to virtues which we do not possess; others may attribute such virtues to us, and we may come to believe it ourselves; we conceive likes and hatreds on insufficient grounds; we forget what we should remember, and remember what we should forget. Our vision is narrow, and our values are false. On the Day of Account all this will be remedied. Not only will true values be restored, but we shall ourselves see the inwardness of things in our own lives, which we never saw before.

...أَحْصَاهُ اللَّهُ وَنَسُوهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٦)

Allah has reckoned its (value), though they may have forgotten it: for Allah is Witness to all things.

Section 2

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

7. Seest thou not that Allah doth know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth?

...مَا يَكُونُ مِن نَّجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ ...

There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them,

C5341. Secrecy is a relative and limited term among ourselves. There is nothing hidden or unknown to Allah. Usually secrecy implies fear or distrust, plotting or wrong-doing. But all is open before Allah's sight.

... وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ...

nor between five but He makes the sixth,

...وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ مِن ذَٰلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا...

nor between fewer nor more, but He is in their midst wheresoever they be:

...ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧)

in the end will He tell them the truth of their conduct, on the Day of Judgment for Allah has full knowledge of all things.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نُهُوا عَنِ النَّجْوَىٰ ...

8. Turnest thou not thy sight towards those who were forbidden secret counsels ...

C5342. When the Muslim Brotherhood was acquiring strength in Madinah and the forces of disruption were being discomfited in open fight against the Messenger of Righteousness, the wicked resorted to duplicity and secret intrigues, in which the ringleaders were the disaffected Jews and the Hypocrites, whose machinations have been frequently referred to in the Quran. e.g. see 2:8-16; and 4:142-145.

... ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ...

... yet revert to that which they were forbidden (to do)?

...وَيَتَنَاجَوْنَ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ...

And they hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger.

...وَإِذَا جَاؤُوكَ حَيَّوْكَ بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللَّهُ...

And when they come to thee, they salute thee, not as Allah salutes thee, (but in crooked ways):

C5343. The salutation of Allah was (and is) "Peace!" But the enemies, who had not the courage to fight openly often twisted the words, and by using a word like "Sam", which meant "Death!" or "Destruction!" instead of "Salam!" (Peace!), they thought they were secretly venting their spite and yet apparently using a polite form of salutation.

Cf. 2:106, and n. 107, where another similar trick is exposed.

...وَيَقُولُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ...

and they say to themselves, "Why does not Allah punish us for our words?"

C5344. The enemies derisively enjoyed their trick (see last note) according to their own perverted mentality. They asked blasphemously, **"Why does not Allah punish us?"**

The answer is given: there is a Punishment, far greater than they imagine: it will come in good time: it will be the final Punishment after Judgment: it is delayed in order to give them a chance of repentance and reformation.

...حَسْبُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٨)

Enough for them is Hell: in it will they burn, and evil is that destination!

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْإِثْمِ...

9. O ye who believe!

when ye hold secret counsel, do it not for iniquity

...وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ وَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى...

and hostility, and disobedience to the Prophet; but do it for righteousness and self-restraint;

C5345. Ordinarily secrecy implies deeds of darkness, something which men have to hide; see the next verse.

But there are good deeds which may be concerted and done in secret: e.g., charity, or the prevention of mischief, or the defeat of the dark plots of evil. The determining factor is the motive.

Is the man doing some wrong or venting his spite, or trying to disobey a lawful command?

Or is he doing some good, which out of modesty or self-renunciation he does not want known, or is he in a righteous cause defeating the machinations of Evil, which may involve great sacrifice of himself?

...وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٩)

and fear Allah, to whom ye shall be brought back.

...إِنَّمَا النَّجْوَى مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ لِيَحْزُنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

10. Secret counsels are only (inspired) by the Evil One, in order that he may cause grief to the Believers;

...وَلَيْسَ بِضَارِّهِمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

but he cannot harm them in the least, except as Allah permits;

C5346. Evil can harm no one who is good, except in so far as,

- there is some question of trial in Allah's Universal Plan, or
- what appears to be harm may be real good.

Nothing happens without Allah's will and permission. And we must always trust Him, and not our cleverness or any adventitious circumstances that draw us the least bit from the path of rectitude.

...وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١٠)

and on Allah let the Believers put their trust.

...يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا

11. O ye who believe! When ye are told to make room in the assemblies, (spread out and) make room:

C5347. Even when a great man or a Leader comes into an Assembly, we are not to press forward without discipline, as it causes inconvenience to him and detriment to public business. Nor are we to shut out other people who have equal rights to be in the Assembly. We must spread out, for Allah's earth is spacious, and so are our opportunities

...يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ...

(Ample) room will Allah provide for you.

...وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُزُوا فَانشُزُوا...

And when ye are told to rise up, rise up:

C5348. Rising up is a mark of respect. Just as those who obey soon become worthy of command, so those who honour where honour is due, become themselves worthy of honour, in various degrees according to their capacities.

"Rise up" here may imply: 'when the Assembly is dismissed, do not loiter about'.

...يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ...

Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted Knowledge:

C5349. Faith makes all people equal in the Kingdom of Allah, as regards the essentials of citizenship in the Kingdom. But there is leadership, and rank and degree, joined with greater or less responsibility, and that depends on true knowledge and insight. (R).

...وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١١)

and Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوَاكُمْ صَدَقَةً ...

12. O ye who believe!

When ye consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation.

C5350. In the Kingdom of Allah all instruction or consultation is open and free. But human nature is weak. And people want special instruction or private consultation with the Prophet from one of several motives:

- they may have, or think they have, a special case, which they are not willing to disclose to their brethren in general;
- they may have some sense of delicacy or dignity, which can only be satisfied by a private interview;
- they may even be selfish enough to want to monopolise the Prophet's time.

These motives are, in an ascending order, worth discouraging; and yet, considering the weakness of human nature, they cannot be reprobated to the extent of shutting out their victims from chances of improvement. It is therefore recommended that they spend something in charity for the good of their poorer brethren before they indulge in such weaknesses.

...ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ...

That will be best for you, and most conducive to purity (of conduct).

C5351. The charity is a sort of expiation for their pardonable weakness. Having made some monetary sacrifice for their poorer brethren they could face them with less shame, and the charity would direct their attention to the need for purifying their motives and conduct. At the same time, this special charity is not made obligatory, lest such persons should be shut out altogether from chances of the higher teaching on account of their pardonable foibles.

...فَإِن لَّمْ تَجِدُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢)

But if ye find not (the wherewithal), Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

...أَأَشْفَقْتُمْ أَن تُقَدِّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوَاكُمْ صَدَقَاتٍ...

13. Is it that ye are afraid of spending sums in charity before your private consultation (with him)?

C5352. Note the plural here, Sadaqat, instead of the singular, Sadaqah in verse 12 above.

While people with the foibles described in n. 5350 may be willing to spend "something" (small) in charity for a special consultation occasionally, they may be frightened of spending large sums when their needs for consultation may be numerous.

What is to be done then?

Are they to be shut out altogether?

No. They are asked to be punctilious in the discharge of their normal duties of at least normal regular prayers and regular charity, "if Allah forgives you", i.e., if Allah's Messenger relieves them of further special contributions such as those noted in verse 12.

...فَإِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَتَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ...

If, then ye do not so, and Allah forgives you, then (at least) establish regular prayer;

This condition, "if Allah forgives you", provides the safeguard against the abuse of the privilege. The messenger would know in each case what is best for the individual and for the community.

... وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ...

practice regular charity;

C5353. Zakah, was instituted about A.H. 2.

...وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٣)

and obey Allah and His Messenger: and Allah is well-acquainted will all that ye do.

Section 3

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم...

14. Turnest thou not thy attention **to those** who turn (in friendship) to such as have the **Wrath of Allah upon them?**

C5354. This refers to the Hypocrites of Madinah who pretended to be in Islam but intrigued with the Jews.

See references as given in n. 5342 above.

C5355. By this time the Jews of Madinah and the Jewish tribes around had become actively hostile to Islam, and were being sharply called to account for their treachery.

...مَّا هُم مِّنكُمْ وَلَا مِنْهُمْ وَيَحْلِفُونَ عَلَى الْكَذِبِ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ (١٤)

They are neither of you nor of them, and they swear to falsehood knowingly.

C5356. They knew that as Muslims their duty was to refrain from the intrigues of the enemies of Islam and to assist Islam against them.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٥)

15. Allah has prepared for them a severe Penalty: evil indeed are their deeds.

اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ...

16. They have made their oaths a screen (for their misdeeds): **Thus they obstruct** (men) from the Path of Allah:

C5357. A false man, by swearing that he is true, makes his falsehood all the more heinous. He stands in the way of other people accepting Truth. He gives a handle to the cynics and the skeptics.

... فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (١٦)

therefore shall they have a humiliating Penalty.

لَن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا...

17. Of no profit whatever to them, against Allah, will be their riches nor their sons:

C5358. They may arrogantly boast of riches of alliances and followers in man-power. But what are such worldly advantages before the Throne of the Disposer of all events? They must come to utter misery.

...أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (١٧)

They will be Companions of the Fire, to dwell therein (for aye)!

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُ كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ...

18. One day will Allah raise them all up (for Judgment): **then will they swear to Him** as they swear to you:

C5359. When Judgment is established, and before they the Truth, they may think (as now) that some oaths or excuses will save them. But they have not now-much less will they have then-any footing to stand upon. Falsehood is falsehood, and must perish. They must learn the worthlessness of their falsehood.

...وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ...

and they think that they have something (to stand upon):

...أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ (١٨)

No, indeed! they are but liars!

... اسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانُ

19. The Evil One has got the better of them:

C5360. Man's original nature as created by Allah is good (30:30, and n. 3541). It is because man, in spite of the warnings he has received, allows Evil to get the mastery over him, that man forgets Allah and the divine qualities which Allah give him. The result of the perversion is that man becomes a partisan of Evil, and as such dooms himself to perdition.

... فَأَنسَاهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطَانِ...

So he has made them lose the remembrance of Allah. They are the Party of the Evil One.

...أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطَانِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (١٩)

Truly, it is the Party of the Evil One that will perish!

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي الْأَذَلِّينَ (٢٠)

20. Those who resist Allah and His Messenger will be among those most humiliated.

C5361. There are various degrees of humiliation in the final state in the next world. But the worst is the humiliation of being numbered among those who ignominiously attempted to resist the Irresistible.

كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٢١)

21. Allah has decreed:

"It is I and My Messenger who must prevail":

For Allah is One full of strength, able to enforce His Will.

C5362. For the meaning of **Aziz**, see n. 2818 to 22:40.

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ...

22. Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, loving those

...مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ

أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ...

who resist Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred.

C5363. If any one believes in Allah and His goodness and justice, and in the Hereafter, in which all true values will be restored he will never love evil or wrong-doing or rebellion against Allah, even if these things are found in his nearest kith and kin.

...أُولَٰئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ ...

For such He has written Faith in their hearts,

C5364. Faith in Allah is indelibly written on the tablets of their hearts and they can never be false to Allah.

... وَأَيَّدَهُم بِرُوحٍ مِّنْهُ ...

and strengthened them with **a spirit from Himself.**

C5365. Cf. 2:87 and 2:253, where it is said that Allah strengthened the Prophet Jesus with the holy spirit.

Here we learn that all good and righteous men are strengthened by Allah. If anything, the phrase used here is stronger. "a spirit from Himself".

Whenever any one offers his heart in faith and purity to Allah, Allah accepts it, engraves that Faith on the seeker's heart, and further fortifies him with his help

which we can no more define adequately than we can define in human language the nature and attributes of Allah.

...وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا...

And He will admit them to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein (for ever).

...رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ...

Allah will be well pleased with them, and they with Him.

C5366. Again we have the doctrine of Allah's Good Pleasure as the highest goal of man, the spiritual heaven which he achieves by a life of purity and faith.

He not only attains Allah's Good Pleasure as the crown of his felicity, but his own nature is so far transformed to the pattern of Allah's original creation that his own good pleasure is in nothing but in Allah's Good Pleasure.

The mutual good pleasure shows the heights to which man can attain.

... أُوْلَئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ ...

They are the Party of Allah.

C5367. This is in antithesis to the Party of the Satan, mentioned in verse 19 above.

The Party of Evil will perish, but while it has its run in the scheme of the present world, the Party of Truth and Reality may be rightly called the Party of Allah, even though all Creation is Allah's in another sense.

...أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٢٢)

Truly it is the Party of Allah, that will achieve Felicity.

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

* Yea, fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) they ye do.*

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Hashr

الْحَشْر

Introduction and Summary

This is the third of the series of ten short Madinah Surahs, dealing each with a specific point in the life of Ummah; see introduction to Surah 57. The special theme here is how treachery to the Ummah on the part of its enemies recoils on the enemies themselves, while it strengthen the bond between the different sections of the Ummah itself, and this illustrated by the story of the expulsion of the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir in Rabi al Awal, 4 A.H.

This fixes the date of the Surah.

Summary- The expulsion of the treacherous Jews from the neighbourhood of Madinah was smoothly accomplished; their reliance on their fortified positions and on the faith of their allies in treachery proved futile. But the internal bonds in the Ummah were strengthened. Such is the wisdom of Allah, Lord of the Most Beautiful Names, (59:1-24, and C. 238).

C.238 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Allah's wisdom foils the treachery of men,
And makes the path smooth for Believers who strive
Even against odds. Against Allah's decrees
All resistance in vain. In property taken
From the enemy, let those in need have a share,
And those who sacrifice their all for the Cause
But those who lend a helping hand
In the hour of need do it for love
And crave no reward, nor feel the least
Envy or jealousy. They all rejoice
That the Brotherhood should thrive. Not so
The Hypocrites; they are false even among
Themselves. Perdition is the end
Of all evil. But the Good and Faithful
Will achieve felicity. Such is the power
Of Truth and Allah's Revelation. Allah!
There is no god but He!---the Good,
The Glorious, the Irresistible!
All Creation sings His praise---
The Exalted in Might, the Wise!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah:

C5368. This verse, introducing the Surah is identical with 57:1. introducing Surah 57.

The theme of both is the wonderful working of Allah's Plan and Providence. In the one case it referred to the conquest of Makkah and taught the lesson of humility.

In this case it refers to the dislodgment of the treacherous Banu Nadir from their nest of intrigue in the neighbourhood of Madinah practically without a blow.

See next note.

...وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١)

for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِن دِيَارِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ...

2. It is He who got out the Unbelievers among **the People of the Book** from their homes at the first gathering (of the forces).

C5369. This refers to the Jewish tribe of the Banu Nadir whose intrigues and treachery nearly undid the Muslim cause during the perilous days of the battle of Uhud in Shawwal, A.H. 3.

Four months after, in Rabi, 1. A.H. 4 steps were taken against them. They were asked to leave the strategic position which they occupied, about three miles south of Madinah, endangering the very existence of the Ummah in Madinah.

At first they demurred, relying on their fortresses and on their secret alliance with the Pagans of Makkah and the

Hypocrites of Madinah. But when the Muslim army was gathered to punish them and actually besieged them for some days, their allies stirred not a finger in their aid, and they were wise enough to leave.

Most of them joined their brethren in Syria, which they were permitted to do, after being disarmed. Some of them joined their brethren in Khaybar; see n. 3705 to 33:27.

The Banu Nadir richly deserved punishment, but their fives were spared, and they were allowed to carry away their goods and chattels.

... مَا ظَنَنتُمْ أَن يَخْرُجُوا ...

Little did ye think that they would get out:

C5370. That is, without actual hostilities, and the shedding of precious Muslim blood.

... وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم مَّانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ ...

and they thought that their fortresses would defend them from Allah!

... فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا وَقَذَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ ...

but the (wrath of) Allah came to them from quarters from which they little expected (it), and cast terror into their hearts,

C5371. They had played a double game. Originally they were sworn allies of the Madinah Muslims under the holy Prophet, but they secretly intrigued with the Makkah Pagans under Abu Sufyan and the Madinah Hypocrites. They even tried treacherously to take the life of the Prophet while he was on a visit to them, breaking both the laws of hospitality and their own sworn alliance.

They thought the Pagan Quraish of Makkah and the Hypocrites of Madinah would help them, but they did not help them. On the contrary the eleven days siege showed them their own helplessness. Their supplies were cut off; the exigencies of the siege necessitated the destruction of their outlying palm trees; and the unexpected turn in their fortunes disheartened them.

Their hearts were stack with terror and they capitulated. But they laid waste their homes before they left:

see next note.

... يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُم بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ...

so that they destroyed their dwellings by their own hands and the hands of the Believers.

C5372. Their lives were spared, and they were allowed ten days in which to remove themselves, their families, and such goods as they could carry. In order to leave no habitations for the Muslims they demolished their own houses and laid waste their property, to complete the destruction which the operations of war had already caused at the hands of the besieging force of the Muslims.

... فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ (٢)

Take warning, then, o ye with eyes (to see)!

... وَلَوْلَا أَن كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَاءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا

3. And had it not been that Allah has decreed banishment for them, He would certainly have punished them in this world:

C5373. Banishment was a comparatively mild punishment for them, but the Providence of Allah had decreed that a chance should be given to them even though they were a treacherous foe.

Within two years, their brethren the Banu Qurayzah showed that they had not profited by their example, and had to be dealt with in another way:

see 33:26 and notes.

...وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ (٣)

and in the Hereafter they shall (certainly) have the Punishment of the Fire.

... ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ

4. That is because they resisted Allah and His Messenger:

...وَمَن يُشَاقِّ اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٤)

and **if anyone resists Allah,** verily Allah is severe in Punishment.

C5374. The punishment of the Banu Nadir was because in breaking their plighted word with the Messenger and in actively resisting Allah's Message and supporting the enemies of that Message, they rebelled against him. For such treason and rebellion the punishment is severe, and yet in this case it was seasoned with Mercy.

مَا قَطَعْتُم مِّن لِّينَةٍ أَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوهَا قَائِمَةً عَلَى أُصُولِهَا فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ...

5. Whether ye cut down (o ye Muslims!) the tender palm-trees, or ye left them standing on their roots, **it was** by leave of Allah,

C5375. The unnecessary cutting down of fruit trees or destruction of crops, or any wanton destruction whatever in war, is forbidden by the law and practice of Islam. But some destruction may be necessary for putting pressure on the enemy, and to that extent it is allowed. But as far as possible, consistently with that objective of military operations, such trees should not be cut down.

Both these principles are in accordance with the Divine Will, and were followed by the Muslims in their expedition.

...وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٥)

and **in order that He might** cover with shame the rebellious transgressors.

C5376. The arrogance of the Banu Nadir had to be humbled, and their power for mischief destroyed.

وَمَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْهُمْ فَمَا أَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَلَا رِكَابٍ ...

6. What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger (and taken away) from them -- for this ye made no expedition with either cavalry or camelry:

C5377. Neither cavalry nor troops mounted on camels were employed in the siege. In fact the enemy surrendered at the first onset.

See 59:2, and n. 5369 above.

...وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهُ عَلَى مَن يَشَاءُ...

but Allah gives power to His messengers over any He pleases:

...وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٦)

and Allah has power over all things.

C5378. Allah accomplishes His purpose in various ways, according to His wise Will and Plan. In some cases a fight is necessary. In some cases the godly attain their objective and overawe the forces of evil without actual fighting.

مَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ ...

7. What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger...

C5379. The Jews had originally come from outside Arabia, and seized on the land near Madinah. They refused to adapt themselves to the people of Arabia, and were in fact a thorn in the side of the genuine Arabs of Madinah. Their dispossession is therefore a restoration of the land to its original people.

But the word **"Fai"** is here understood in a technical sense, as meaning property abandoned by the enemy or taken from him without a formal war. In that sense it is distinguished from **"Anfal**, or spoils, taken after actual fighting, about which see 8:1 and 41.

... مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى ...

(and taken away) from the people of the townships,

C5380. "The people of the townships":

the townships were the Jewish settlements round Madinah, of the Banu Nadir, and possibly of other tribes.

Cf. the -townships- mentioned in 59:14 below.

The reference cannot be to the Wadi-ul-Qura (Valley of Towns), now Madain Salih, which was subjugated after Khaybar and Fadak in A.H. 7, unless this verse is later than the rest of the Surah.

... فَلِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ...

belongs to Allah, to His Messenger and to kindred and orphans, the needy and the wayfarer;

C5381. "Belongs to Allah": i.e., to Allah's Cause; and the beneficiaries are further detailed.

No shares are fixed; they depend upon circumstances, and are left to the Judgement of the Leader.

Compare a similar list of those entitled to Charity, in 2:177, but the two lists refer to different circumstances and have different beneficiaries in addition to the portion common to both.

...كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنكُمْ ...

in order that it may not (Merely) make a circuit between the wealth among you.

...وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانتَهُوا ...

So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you.

C5381a. alternately these words may be translated: "So take what the Messenger gives you, and refrains from what he prohibits you". [Eds.]

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٧)

And fear Allah; for Allah is strict in Punishment.

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ ...

8. (Some part is due) to the indigent **Muhajirs**, those who were expelled from their homes and their property,

C5382. The **Muhajir** are those who forsook their homes and property in Makkah in order to assist the holy Prophet in his migration to Madinah (Hijrah). Their devotion and sincerity were proved beyond doubt by their self-denial, and they were now to be rewarded.

...يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَيَنصُرُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ...

while seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good pleasure, and aiding Allah and His Messenger:

...أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (٨)

such are indeed the sincere ones -

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ...

9. But those who, before them, had homes (in Madinah) and had adopted the Faith,

C5383. This refers to the Ansar (the Helpers), the people of Madinah who accepted Islam when it was persecuted in Makkah, and who invited the holy Prophet to join them and become their Leader in Madinah.

The Hijrah was possible because of their goodwill and their generous hospitality. They entertained the Prophet and all the refugees (*Muhajirs*) who came with him. The most remarkable ties of full brotherhood were established between individual members of the one group and the other. Until the Ummah got its own resources, the Helpers regularly gave and the Refugees regularly received.

The Helpers counted it a privilege to entertain the Refugees, and even the poor vied with the rich in their spirit of self-sacrifice. When the confiscated land and property of the Banu Nadir was divided, and the major portion was assigned to the refugees, there was not the least jealousy on the part of the Helpers. They rejoiced in the good fortune of their brethren. And incidentally they were themselves relieved of anxiety and responsibility on their behalf.

... يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّا أُوتُوا...

show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire, in their hearts for things given to the (latter),

... وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ...

but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot).

... وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٩)

And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls, they are the ones that achieve prosperity.

... وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ

10. And those who came after them say:

C5384. Those that came after them:

the immediate meaning would refer to later arrivals in Madinah or later accessions to Islam, compared with the early Muhajirs.

But the general meaning would include all future comers into the House of Islam.

They pray, not only for themselves, but for all their brethren, and above all, they pray that their hearts may be purified of any desire or tendency to disparage the work or virtues of other Muslims or to feel any jealousy on account of their successes or good fortune.

... رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ ...

"Our Lord!

Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith,

... وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا ...

and **leave not, in our hearts, rancor** (or sense of injury) against those who have believed our Lord!

C5385. Cf. 7:43, and n. 1021.

... إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٠)

Thou art indeed Full of Kindness, Most Merciful."

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ...

11. Hast thou not observed the Hypocrites say to their misbelieving brethren among the People of the Book? --

C5386. The Jews of the Banu Nadir had been assured by the Hypocrites of Madinah of their support to their cause. They had thought that their defection from the Prophet's Cause would so weaken that cause that they would save their friends. But they never intended to undertake any act involving self-sacrifice. on their part; if they had helped their Jewish friends, it was not likely that they would have succeeded; and if they had actually gone to the fight; they had neither valour nor fervour to support them, and they would have fled ignominiously before the discipline, earnestness, and Faith of the men of Islam.

... لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا...

"If ye are expelled, We too will go out with you, and we will never hearken to anyone in your affair;

... وَإِن قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنصُرَنَّكُمْ ...

and if ye are attacked (in fight) we will help you."

... وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١١)

But Allah is witness that they are indeed liars.

C5387. For this actually happened. They never stirred a finger for the Jews, and they never intended to do so. And Allah knows all their motives and secrets:

cf. 47:26, n. 4850.

... لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِن قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنصُرُونَهُمْ

12. If they are expelled, never will they go out with them;

and if they are attacked (in fight), they will never help them;

... وَلَئِن نَّصَرُوهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ الْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ (١٢)

and if they do help them, they will turn their backs; so they will receive no help.

C5388. All hopes founded on iniquity and treachery are vain and illusory. There may be honour among thieves. But there is no honour as between dishonest intriguers, and they are not likely to get any real help from any quarter.

لَأَنتُمْ أَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنَ اللَّهِ ...

13. Of a truth ye are stronger (than they) because of the terror in their hearts, (sent) by Allah.

C5389. As construed here, the meaning is: "Ye Muslims, even if ye are weak numerically, or they may have other seeming advantages, ye are really stronger than they are, because they have a wholesome fear in their minds, and Allah sends such fear into the hearts of wrongdoers!"

An alternate construction would yield the meaning:

Being Unbelievers they fear you more than they fear Allah, because your valour they see, but in Allah they do not believe.

... ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ (١٣)

This is because they are men devoid of understanding.

لَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ جَمِيعًا إِلَّا فِي قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ أَوْ مِن وَرَاءِ جُدُرٍ ...

14. They will not fight you (even) together, except in fortified townships, or from behind walls.

C5390. They have not sufficient self-confidence or élan to sustain them in a fight except under material advantages or defences. Even if they join forces, they have not sufficient trust in each other to expose themselves to open fighting.

... بَأْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيدٌ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيعًا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ شَتَّىٰ ...

Strong is their fighting (spirit) amongst themselves:

thou wouldst think they were united, but their hearts are divided:

C5391. 'It may be that they have a strong fighting spirit among themselves, but they have no Cause to fight for and no common objective to achieve.

The Makkan Pagans want to keep their own unjust autocracy; the Madinah Hypocrites wish for their own domination in Madinah; and the Jews want their racial superiority established over the Arabs, of whose growing union and power they are jealous.'

Their pretended alliance could not stand the strain of either a defeat or a victory. If they had been wise, they would have accepted the Cause of Unity, Faith, and Truth.

... ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُونَ (١٤)

that is because they are a people devoid of wisdom.

... كَمَثَلِ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا

15. Like those who lately preceded them,

C5392. The immediate reference was probably to the Jewish goldsmith tribe of the Qaynuqa, who were also settled in a fortified township near Madinah. They were also punished and banished for their treachery, about a month after the battle of Badr, in which the Makkan Pagans had suffered a signal defeat, in Shawwal, A.H. 2. The Nadir evidently did not take that lesson to heart.

The general meaning is that we must learn to be on our guard against the consequences of treachery and sin. No fortuitous alliances with other men of iniquity will save us.

... ذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٥)

they have tasted the evil result of their conduct, and (in the Hereafter there is) for them a grievous Penalty --

...كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنسَانِ اكْفُرْ

16. (Their allies deceived them), like the Evil One, when he says to man, "Deny Allah;"

... فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦)

but when (man) denies Allah, (the Evil One) says,

"I am free of thee: I do fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!"

C5393. An apt simile.

Evil tempts man in all sort of ways, and presents seductive promises and alliances to delude him into the belief that he will be saved from the consequences. Satan says, **"Deny Allah"**: which means not merely denial in words, but denial in acts, disobedience of Allah's Law, deviation from the path of rectitude.

When the sinner gets well into the mire, Satan says cynically: "How can I help you against Allah? Don't you see I am afraid of Him? All our alliances and understandings were moonshine. You must bear the consequences of your own folly."

فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتَهُمَا أَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدَيْنِ فِيهَا...

17. The end of both will be that they will go into the Fire, dwelling therein for ever.

... وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاء الظَّالِمِينَ (١٧)

Such is the reward of wrongdoers.

Section 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ...

18. O ye who believe! Fear Allah,

C5394. The "fear of Allah" is akin to love; for it means the fear of offending Him or doing anything wrong that will forfeit His Good Pleasure. This is Taqwa, which implies self restraint, guarding ourselves from all sin, wrong, and injustice, and the positive doing of good.

See 2:2, and n.26.

... وَلْتَنظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ...

and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for the morrow.

C5395. The positive side of Taqwa, or "fear of Allah" (see last note) is here emphasised.

It is not merely a feeling or an emotion: it is an act, a doing of things which become a preparation and provision for the Hereafter,-the next life, which may be described as "the morrow" in relation to the present Life, which is "to-day".

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٨)

Yea, fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with (all) they ye do.

C5395a. The repetition emphasises both sides of Taqwa: "let your soul fear to do wrong and let it do every act of righteousness; for Allah observes both your inner motives and your acts, and in His scheme of things everything will have its due consequences."

... وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ

19. And be ye not like those who forget Allah; and He made them forget their own souls!

C5396. To forget Allah is to forget the only Eternal Reality.

As we are only reflected realities, how can we understand or do justice to or remember ourselves, when we forget the very source of our being? (R).

... أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (١٩)

such are the rebellious transgressors!

... لَا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ

20. Not equal are the Companions of the Fire and the Companions of the Garden:

... أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ (٢٠)

it is the Companions of the Garden that will achieve Felicity.

C5397. The others, the Companions of the Fire, will find their lives wasted and nullified. Their capacities will be rendered inert and their wishes will end in futility.

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ ...

21. Had We sent down this Qur'án on a mountain ....

C5398. There are two ideas associated in men's minds with a mountain:

- one is its height,
- and the other that it is rocky, stony, hard, Now comes the metaphor.

The Revelation of Allah is so sublime that even the highest mountains humble themselves before it. The Revelation is so powerful and convincing that even the hard rock splits asunder under it.

Will man then be so arrogant as to consider himself superior to it, or so hard-hearted as not to be affected by its powerful Message?

The answer is

"No" for unspoilt man;

"Yes" for man when degraded by sin to be the vilest of creatures.

... لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ...

.. verily, thou would have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of Allah,

C5399. Cf. 7:143, and n. 1103, where, in the story of Moses, the Mount became as dust "when the Lord manifested His Glory".

Also cf. 33:72, and n. 3778, where the mountains are mentioned as an emblem of stability, but as refusing to accept the Trust (*Amanat*) because they felt themselves to be too humble to be equal to such a tremendous Trust. (R).

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١)

such are the similitudes which We propound to men, that they may reflect.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

22. Allah is He, than whom there is no other god --

C5400. Here follows a passage of great sublimity, summing up the attributes of Allah.

In this verse, we have the general attributes, which give us the fundamental basis on which we can form some idea of Allah. We start with the proposition that there is nothing else like Him. We think of His Unity; all the varying and conflicting forces in Creation are controlled by Him and look to Him, and we can never get a true idea of Him unless we understand the meaning of Unity.

His knowledge extends to everything seen and unseen, present and future, near and far, in being and not in being: in fact these contrasts, which apply to our knowledge, do not apply to Him.

His Grace and His Mercy are unbounded: see 1:1, and n. 19; and unless we realise these, we can have no true conception of our position in the working of His Will and Plan. (R).

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢٢)

Who knows (all things) both secret and open;

He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

23. Allah is He, than whom there is no other god --

C5401. This phrase is repeated from the last verse in order to lead us to the contemplation of some other attributes of Allah, after we have realized those which form our fundamental conceptions of Allah.

See the preceding and the following note.

... الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ ...

- the sovereign,
- the Holy One,
- the Source of Peace (and Perfection).

- The Guardian of Faith,
- the Preserver of Safety,

C5402. How can a translator reproduce the sublimity and the comprehensiveness of the magnificent Arabic words, which mean so much in a single symbol?

1. **"The Sovereign"** in our human language implies the one undisputed authority which is entitled to give commands and to receive obedience, and which in fact receives obedience; the power which enforces law and justice.
2. Human authority may be misused, but in the title **"the Holy One"**, we postulate a Being free from all stain or evil, and replete with the highest Purity.
3. **"Salam"** has not only the idea of Peace as opposed to Conflict, but wholeness as opposed to defects: hence our paraphrase "Source of Peace and Perfection".
4. **Ma-min,** one who entertains Faith, who gives Faith to others, who is never false to the Faith that others place in him: hence our paraphrase "Guardian of Faith:.
5. **"Preserver of Safety";** guarding all from danger, corruption, loss, etc.; the word is used for the Quran in 5:48.

These are the attributes of kindness and benevolence: in the next note are described the attributes of power.

... الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ...

- the Exalted in Might,
- the Irresistible,
- the Supreme:

C5403. See last note.

6. Allah is not only good, but He can carry out His Will.
7. And if anything resists or opposes Him, His Will prevails.

8. For He is Supreme, above all things and creatures.

Thus we come back to the Unity with which we began in verse 22.

... سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٢٣)

Glory to Allah! (high is He) **above the partners** they attribute to Him.

C5404. Such being Allah's attributes of Goodness and Power, how foolish is it of men to worship anything else but Him?

Who can approach His glory and goodness?

... هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ

24. He is Allah,

- the Creator,

C5405. Allah's attributes of Goodness and Power having been referred to, we are now told of His creative energy, of which three aspects are here mentioned, as explained in the following note. The point is emphasised that He does not merely create and leave alone; He goes on fashioning, evolving new forms and colours, and sustaining all the energies and capacities which He has put into His Creation, according to various laws which He has established.

... الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ ....

- the Evolver,
- the Bestower of Forms (or colors).

C5406. The act or acts of creation have various aspects, and the various words used in this connection are summarized in n. 120 to 2:117, as supplemented by n. 916 to 6:94 and n. 923 to 6:98.

Khalaqa is the general term for creation, and the Author of all Creation is **Khaliq**.

Baraa implies a process of evolving from previously created matter or state; the Author of this process is **Bariu**, the Originator.

Sawwara implies giving definite form or colour, so as to make a thing exactly suited to a given end or object: hence the title **Musawwir**, Fashioner for this shows the completion of the visible stage of creation.

.. لَهُ الْأَسْمَاء الْحُسْنَى...

To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names:

C5407. Cf. 7:180, n. 1154; and 17:110, n. 2322.

... يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...

Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare His Praises and Glory:

C5408. Thus the argument of the Sura is rounded off on the same note as was struck at the beginning 59:1.

The first verse and the last verse of the Surah are the same, except as regards the tense of the verb **sabbaha**.

In the first verse it is the optative form of the preterite **sabbaha**: everything declares the Glory of Allah! After the illustrations given, the declaratory form of the aorist is appropriate, **yusabbihu**: "everything doth declare the Glory of Allah'.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢٤)

and He is the exalted in Might, the Wise.

The Absolute Reality

رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

Our Lord! In You (Alone) we put our trust, and to You (Alone) we turn in repentance, and to You (Alone) is (our) final Return,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Mumtahinah

الْمُمْتَحِنَة

Introduction and Summary

This is the fourth of the ten Madinah Surahs, each dealing with a special point in the life of the Ummah.

Here the point is: what social relations are possible with the Unbelievers? A distinction is made between those who persecute you for your Faith and want to destroy you and your Faith, and those who have shown no such rancour. For the later there is hope of mercy and forgiveness. The question of women and cross-marriage is equitably dealt with.

The date is after the Pagans had broken the treaty of Hudaybiyah, for which see Introduction to Surah 47--- say about A.H. 8, not long before the conquest of Makkah.

Summary- The enemies of your Faith, who would exterminate you and your Faith, are not fit objects of your love: follow Abraham's example: but with those Unbelievable who show no rancour, you should deal with kindness and justice: marriage between Believers and Unbelievers, (60-1-13, and C. 239).

C.239 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

What social relations should you hold
With men whose hearts are filled with rancour---
Who hate both Allah and men of God?
Surely you cannot offer love and friendship
To such as seek to destroy your Faith,
And you. Seek protection for you and yours
From Allah and not from Allah's sworn enemies.
But deal kindly and justly with all; it may be
That those who hate you now may love you;
For Allah can order all things. But look not
For protection to those who are bent on driving
You out. Let not believing women
Be handed over to Unbelievers;
No marriage tie is lawful between them.
When women wish to join your society,
Take their assurance that they yield not
To sin or unbeseeming conduct.
Take every care to keep your society
Free and pure, and self-contained.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاء ...

1. O ye who believe!

take not My enemies and yours as friends (or protectors) --

... تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِمَا جَاءكُم مِّنَ الْحَقِّ ...

offering them (your) love, even though they have rejected the Truth that has come to you,

C5409. The immediate occasion for this was a secret letter sent by one Hatib, a Muhajir, from Madinah, to the Pagans at Makkah, in most friendly terms, seeking for their protection on behalf of his children and relatives left behind in Makkah.

The letter was intercepted, and he confessed the truth. He was forgiven as he told the truth and his motive did not appear to be heinous, but this instruction was given for future guidance.

This was shortly before the conquest of Makkah, but the principle is of universal application. You cannot be on terms of secret intimacy with the enemies of your Faith and people, who are persecuting your Faith and seeking to destroy your Faith and you. You may not do so even for the sake of your relatives as it compromises the life and existence of your whole community.

... يُخْرِجُونَ الرَّسُولَ وَإِيَّاكُمْ أَن تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ رَبِّكُمْ ...

and have (on the contrary) driven out the Prophet and yourselves (from your homes), (simply) because ye believe in Allah your Lord!

C5410. Such was the position of the Muslim community in Madinah after the Hijrah and before the conquest of Makkah.

... إِن كُنتُمْ خَرَجْتُمْ جِهَادًا فِي سَبِيلِي وَابْتِغَاء مَرْضَاتِي تُسِرُّونَ

إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ ...

If ye have come out to strive in My Way and to seek My Good Pleasure, (take them not as friends), holding secret converse of love (and friendship) with them:

... وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ بِمَا أَخْفَيْتُمْ وَمَا أَعْلَنتُمْ ...

for I know full well all that ye conceal and all that ye reveal.

وَمَن يَفْعَلْهُ مِنكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاء السَّبِيلِ (١)

And any of you that does this has strayed from the Straight Path.

إِن يَثْقَفُوكُمْ يَكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاء وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتَهُم

بِالسُّوءِ ...

2. If they were to get the better of you, they would behave to you as enemies, and stretch forth their hands and their tongues against you for evil;

C5411. Besides the question of your fidelity to your own people, even your own selfish interests require you to beware of secret intrigues with enemies. They will welcome you as cat's paw. But what will happen when they have used you and got the better of you and your people! Then they will show you their hand. And a heavy hand it will be! Not only will they injure you with their hands but with their tongues! The only words they will use for you will be "Traitors to their own"! If they intrigue with you now, it is to pervert you from the Path of Truth and righteousness and win you over to their evil ways.

... وَوَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ (٢)

and they desire that ye should reject the Truth.

لَن تَنفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ ...

3. Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children

C5412. The plea of children and relatives (see n. 5409 above) will be no excuse for treachery when the Day of

Judgment comes. Your children and family will not save you. The Judgment will be in the hands of Allah, and He has full knowledge of all your overt and hidden acts and motives.

... يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ...

on the Day of Judgment: He will judge between you:

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٣)

for Allah sees well and that ye do.

... قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ ...

4. There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him,

C5413. See 9:114.

Abraham was tender-hearted, and loyal to his father and his people. He warned them against idolatry and sin, and prayed for his father, but when his father and his people became open enemies of Allah, Abraham entirely dissociated himself from them, and left his home, his father, his people, and his country. Those with him were his believing wife and nephew Lut and any other Believers that went into exile with him.

... إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَاءُ مِنكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ ...

when they said to their people:

"We are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah:

... كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ ...

and there has arisen between us and you, enmity

C5414. The enemies of Allah are enemies of the righteous, and they hate the righteous. Therefore the righteous must cut themselves off eternally from them, unless they repent and come back to Allah. In that case they receive Allah's mercy and are entitled to all the rights of love and brotherhood. This shows that our detestation is for evil, not for men as such so long as there is a chance for repentance.

See also verse 7 below.

But we must give no chance to Evil for working evil on our Brotherhood at any time.

... وَالْبَغْضَاء أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحْدَهُ ...

and hatred forever -- unless ye believe in Allah and Him alone":

... إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن

شَيْءٍ ...

But not when Abraham said to his father:

"I will pray for forgiveness for thee, though I have no power (to get) aught on thy behalf from Allah."

C5415. Refer again to 9:114, n. 1365: and n. 5413 above.

Abraham's conduct is not condemned. it was a special case, and is not to be imitated by weaker men, who may fall into sin by thinking too much of sinners.

... رَّبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٤)

(They prayed): "Our Lord! in Thee do we trust and

to Thee do we turn in repentance:

to Thee is (our) final Goal.

C5416. This prayer indicates what our attitude should be. We must trust to Allah, and not to Allah's enemies to protect and befriend ourselves, our families, or those near and dear to us.

... رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

5. "Our Lord! Make us not a (test and) trial for the Unbelievers,

C5417. In n. 1198 to 8:25, I have explained the shades of meaning in the word Fitnah.

In 2:102 Harut and Marut were a trial to test the righteous who trusted in Allah from the unrighteous who resorted to evil and superstition.

Here the prayer to Allah is that we should be saved from becoming so weak as to tempt the Unbelievers to try to attack and destroy us.

... وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَا ...

but forgive us, our Lord!

... إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٥)

For Thou art the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

... لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ ...

6. There was indeed **in them** an excellent example for you to follow -- for those whose hope is in Allah and in the Last Day.

C5418. In them: i.e. in their attitude of prayer and reliance on Allah, and of dissociation from evil.

... وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٦)

But if any turn away, truly Allah is Free of all Wants, Worthy of all Praise.

C5419. If any one rejects Allah's Message or Law, the loss is his own. It is not Allah Who needs him or his worship or his sacrifice or his praise. Allah is independent of all wants, and His attributes are inherently deserving of all praise, whether the wicked give such praise or not, in word or deed.

Section 2

عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُم مِّنْهُم مَّوَدَّةً ...

7. It may be that **Allah will grant love** (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies:

C5420. Apparent religious hatred or enmity or persecution may be due to ignorance or over-zeal in a soul, which Allah will forgive and use eventually in His service, as happened in the case of Hadhrat 'Umar, who was a different man before and after his conversion.

As stated in n. 5414 above, we should hate evil, but not men as such.

وَاللَّهُ قَدِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٧)

for Allah has power (over all things);

and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ...

8. Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes,

... أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ...

from dealing kindly and justly with them:

C5421. Even with Unbelievers, unless they are rampant and out to destroy us and our Faith, we should deal kindly and equitably, as is shown by our holy Prophet's own example.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (٨)

for Allah loveth those who are just.

إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ...

9. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes,

... وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَى إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ...

and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection).

وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٩)

It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مُهَاجِرَاتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ...

10. O ye who believe!

when there come to you believing women refugees, examine (and test) them:

C5422. Under the treaty of Hudaybiyah [see Introduction to Surah 48, paragraph 4, condition (3)], women under guardianship (including married women), who fled from the Quraish in Makkah to the Prophet's protection at Madinah were to be sent back. But before this Ayah was issued, the Quraish had already broken the treaty, and some instruction was necessary as to what the Madinah Muslims should do in those circumstances. Muslim women married to Pagan husbands in Makkah were oppressed for their Faith, and some of them came to Madinah as refugees. After this, they were not to be returned to the custody of their Pagan husbands at Makkah, as the marriage of believing women with non-Muslims was held to be dissolved if the husbands did not accept Islam. But in order to give no suspicion to the Pagans that they were badly treated as they lost the dower they had given on marriage, that dower was to be repaid to the husbands. Thus helpless women refugees were to be protected at the cost of the Muslims.

... اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ ...

Allah knows best as to their Faith:

... فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ...

if ye ascertain that they are Believers, then send them not back to the Unbelievers.

C5423. The condition was that they should be Muslim women. How were the Muslims to know?

A non-Muslim woman, in order to escape from her lawful guardians in Makkah, might pretend that she was a Muslim. The true state of her mind and heart would be known to Allah alone. But if the Muslims, on an examination of the woman, found that she professed Islam, she was to have protection. The examination would be directed (among other things) to the points mentioned in verse 12 below.

... لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ ...

They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers, nor are the (Unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them.

... وَآتُوهُم مَّا أنفَقُوا...

But pay the Unbelievers what they have spent (on their dower).

... وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أن تَنكِحُوهُنَّ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ ...

And there will be no blame on you if ye marry them on payment of their dower to them.

C5424. As the marriage was held to be dissolved (see n. 5422 above), there was no bar to the remarriage of the refugee Muslim woman with a Muslim man on the payment of the usual dower to her.

... وَلَا تُمْسِكُوا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ ...

But hold not to the guardianship of unbelieving women:

C5425. Unbelieving women in a Muslim society would only be a clog and a handicap. There would be neither happiness for them, nor could they conduce in any way to a healthy life of the society in which they lived as aliens. They were to be sent away, as their marriage was held to be dissolved; and the dowers paid to them were to be demanded from the guardians to whom they were sent back, just as in the contrary case the dowers of believing women were to be paid back to their Pagan ex-husbands (n. 5422 above).

... وَاسْأَلُوا مَا أَنفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْأَلُوا مَا أَنفَقُوا...

ask for what ye have spent on their dowers, and let the (Unbelievers) ask for what they have spent (on the dowers of women who come over to you).

ذَٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٠)

Such is the command of Allah:

He judges (with justice) between you: and Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

وَإِن فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبْتُمْ ...

11. And if any of your wives deserts you to the Unbelievers, and ye have an accession (by the coming over of a woman from the other side),

C5426. A very unlikely contingency, considering how much better position the women occupied in Islam than under Pagan custom. But all contingencies have to be provided for equitably in legislation. If a woman went over to the Pagans, her dower would be recoverable from the Pagans and payable to the deserted husband.

If a woman came over from the Pagans, her dower would be payable to the Pagans. Assuming that the two dowers were equal, the one would be set off against the other as between the two communities; but within the communities the deserted individual would be compensated by the individual who gains a wife. If the dowers were unequal, the balance would be recoverable as between the communities, and the adjustment would then be made as between the individuals.

In practice the common Fund compensated the deserted husband in anticipation of any necessary adjustments.

... فَآتُوا الَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتْ أَزْوَاجُهُم مِّثْلَ مَا أَنفَقُوا...

then pay to those whose wives have deserted the equivalent of what they had spent (on their dower):

... وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنتُم بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ (١١)

and fear Allah, in Whom ye believe.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰ أَن لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا...

12. O Prophet!

when believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee, that

- they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah,

C5427. Now come directions as to the points on which women entering Islam should pledge themselves. Similar points apply to men, but here the question is about women, and especially such as were likely, in those early

days of Islam, to come from Pagan society into Muslim society in the conditions discussed in notes 5422 and 5423 above.

A pledge on these points would search out their real motives:

1. to worship none but Allah;
2. not to steal;
3. not to indulge in sex outside the marriage tie;
4. not to commit infanticide; (the Pagan Arabs were prone to female infanticide):
5. not to indulge in slander or scandal; and
6. generally, to obey loyally the law and principles of Islam.

The last was a comprehensive and sufficient phrase, but it was good to indicate also the special points to which attention was to be directed in those special circumstances. Obedience was of course to be in all things just and reasonable: Islam requires strict discipline but not slavishness. (R).

... وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ ...

- that they will not steal,
- that they will not commit adultery (or fornication),
- that they will not kill their children,

... وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ ...

- that they will not utter slander, intentionally forging falsehood,

C5427a. "That they will not utter slander intentionally forging falsehood". Literally, "...nor produce any lie that they have devised between their hands and feet,". These words mean that they should not falsely attribute the paternity of their illegitimate children to their lawful husbands thereby adding to the monstrosity of their original sin of infidelity. [Eds.]

... وَلَا يَعْصِينَكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهَ ...

- and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter --

then do thou receive their fealty, and pray to Allah for the forgiveness (of their sins):

C5428. If pledges are sincerely given for future conduct, admission to Islam is open. If there is anything in the past, for which there is evidence of sincere repentance, forgiveness is to be prayed for. Allah forgives in such cases: how can man refuse to give such cases a real chance?

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٢)

for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

13. O ye who believe!

turn not (for friendship) to people on whom is the Wrath of Allah.

C5429. So we come back to the theme with which we started in this Surah: that we should not turn for friendship and intimacy to those who break Allah's Law and are outlaws in Allah's Kingdom.

The various phrases of this question, and the legitimate qualifications, have already been mentioned, and the argument is here rounded off.

Cf. also 58:14.

... قَدْ يَئِسُوا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ كَمَا يَئِسَ الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْقُبُورِ (١٣)

Of the Hereafter they are already in despair, just as the Unbelievers are in despair about those (buried) in graves.

C5430. The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future Life, can therefore have no hope beyond this life. Miserable indeed is this life to them; for the ills of this life are real to them, and they can have no hope of redress.

But such is also the state of others- People of the Book or not-who wallow in sin and incur the divine Wrath. Even if they believe in a Future Life, it can only be to them a life of horror, punishment, and despair.

For those of Faith the prospect is different. They may suffer in this life, but this life to them is only a fleeting shadow that will soon pass away. The Reality is beyond; there will be full redress in the Beyond, and Achievement and Felicity such as they can scarcely conceive of in the terms of this life.



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

O ye who believe! why say ye that which ye do not?

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Saff

الصَّف

Introduction and Summary

This is the fifth Surah of the of series of short Madinah Surahs beginning with Surah 57.Its subject matter is the need of discipline, practical work, and self-sacrifice in the cause of Ummah. Its date is uncertain, but it was probably shortly after the battle of Uhud, which was fought in Shawal, A.H. 3.

Summary- Allah's Glory shines through all Creation: but that discipline can you show to back your words with action? What lessons can you learn from the stories of Moses and Jesus? Help the Cause, and Allah's help will come with glorious results (61:1-14, and C. 240).

C.240 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Allah's glory shines through all the universe
What deeds of unity and discipline,
Of love and righteousness, have you
To show in conduct? Or do you
Only mock and insult the messengers
As they did of old? Nay, trust in Allah
And strive your utmost in His Cause.
Little have you to give, but glorious
Is the reward that Allah will give you---
Now and in the Eternal Life to come!



سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah:

C5431. This verse is identical with 59:1.

The latter illustrated the theme of the wonderful working of Allah's providence in defeating the wiles of His enemies. Here the same theme is illustrated by showing the need for unshaken discipline if we are to receive the help of Allah.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١)

for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٢)

2. O ye who believe! why say ye that which ye do not?

C5432. At **Uhud** there was some disobedience and therefore breach of discipline. People had talked much, but had failed to back up their resolution in words with firmness in action. See n. 442 to 3:121. But on all

occasions when men's deeds are not commensurate with their words, their conduct is odious in the sight of Allah, and it is only due to Allah's Mercy if they are saved from disaster.

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِندَ اللَّهِ أَن تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٣)

3. Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُم بُنيَانٌ مَّرْصُوصٌ (٤)

4. Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause **in battle array, as if** they were **a solid cemented structure.**

C5433. A battle array, in which a large number of men stand, march, or hold together against assault as if they were a solid wall, is a striking example of order, discipline, cohesion, and courage.

"A solid cemented structure" is even a better simile than the usual "solid wall" as the "structure" or building implies a more diversified organisation held together in unity and strength, each part contributing strength in its own way, and the whole held together not like a mass but like a living organism. Cf. also 37:I and n. 4031.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ ...

5. And remember, Moses said to his people:

C5434. The people of Moses often rebelled against him, vexed his spirit, and insulted him. See 33:69, n. 3774, and (in the Old Testament) Num 12:1-13.

They did it not through ignorance, but from a selfish, perverse, and rebellious spirit, for which they received punishment. The Ummah of Islam should remember and take note of it, and should avoid any deviation from the Law and Will of Allah.

... يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُونَنِي وَقَد تَّعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ ...

"O my people!

why do ye vex and insult me, though ye know that I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you?"

فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ ...

Then when they went wrong, Allah let their hearts go wrong:

C5435. The sinner's own will deviates, i.e., goes off from the right way, and he does wrong. That means that he shuts off Allah's grace. Allah then, after his repeated rebellion, withdraws the protecting Grace from him, and the sinner's heart is tainted: there is "a disease in his heart", which is the centre of his being: his spiritual state is ruined. Allah's guidance is withdrawn from him.

... وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٥)

for Allah guides not those who are rebellious transgressors.

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُم ...

6. And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you

C5436. The mission of Jesus was to his own people, the Jews.

Cf. Matt. 10:5-6.

See also Matt. 15:24: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel;"

also Matt. 15:26: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs."

... مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ ...

confirming the Law (which came) before me,

C5437. Cf. Matt. 5:17.

... وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِن بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ ...

and giving glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be **Ahmad**."

C5438. "Ahmad", or **"Muhammad"**, the Praised One, is almost a translation of the Greek word Periclytos.

In the present Gospel of John. 14:16, 15:26, and 16:7, the word **"Comforter"** in the English version is for the Greek word "Paracletos", which means "Advocate", "one

called to the help of another, a kind friend", rather than "Comforter".

Our doctors contend that Paracleots is a corrupt reading for Periclytos, and that in their original saying of Jesus there was a prophecy of our holy Prophet Ahmad by name. Even if we read Paraclete, it would apply to the holy Prophet, who is "a Mercy for all creatures" (21:107) and "most kind and merciful to the Believers" (9:128).

See also n. 416 to 3:81.

... فَلَمَّا جَاءهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ...

But when he came to them with Clear Signs,

C5439. Our holy Prophet was foretold in many ways; and when he came, he showed forth many Clear Signs, for his whole life from beginning to end was one vast miracle. He fought and won against odds. Without learning from men he taught the highest wisdom. He melted hearts that were hard, and he strengthened hearts that were tender and required support. In all his sayings and doings men of discernment could see the working of Allah's hand; yet the ignorant Unbelievers called it all Sorcery!-called that unreal which became the most solid fact of human history!

... قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٦)

they said, "This is evident sorcery!"

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَى إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ ...

7. Who doth greater wrong than one who invents falsehood against Allah, even as he is being invited to Islam?

C5440. It is wrong in any case to uphold falsehoods and debasing superstitions, but it is doubly wrong when these are put forward in rivalry or opposition to the light of eternal Unity and Harmony which is Islam. Allah sends His guidance freely, but withdraws His Grace from those who willfully do wrong.

... وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٧)

And Allah guides not those who do wrong.

يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِؤُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ ...

8. Their intention is to extinguish Allah's Light (by blowing) with their mouths:

C5441. Allah's Light is unquenchable. A foolish, ignorant person who thinks of extinguishing it is like a rustic who wants to blow out electric light as he might blow out a rush candle! "With their mouths" also implies the babble and cackle of Ignorance against Allah's Truth. The more the foolish ones try to quench Allah's Light, the clearer it shines, to shame them!

... وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨)

but Allah will complete (the revelation of) His Light, even though the Unbelievers may detest (it).

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ ...

9. It is He Who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the Religion of Truth,

... لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٩)

that he may proclaim it **over all religion,** even though the Pagans may detest (it).

C5442. "Over all religion": in the singular: not over all other religions, in the plural. There is really only one true Religion, the Message of Allah submission to the Will of Allah: this is called Islam.

It was the religion preached by Moses and Jesus; it was the religion of Abraham, Noah, and all the prophets, by whatever name it may be called.

If people corrupt that pure light, and call their religions by different names, we must bear with them, and we may allow the names for convenience. But Truth must prevail over all.

See also 9:33, (n. 1290), and 48:28, n. 4912.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى تِجَارَةٍ تُنجِيكُم مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (١٠)

10. O ye who believe! shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? --

C5443. Tijarat: bargain, trade, traffic, transaction: something given or done, in return for something which we desire to get.

What we give or do on our part is described in verse 11 below, and what we get is described in verse 12.

It is truly a wonderful bargain: what we are asked to give is so little; what we are promised in return is so much. There comes Allah's unbounded Bounty and Munificence.

Cf. also 9:111, where the bargain is stated in another way.

تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ...

11. - That ye believe in Allah and His Messenger,

- and that ye strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your property and your persons:

... ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (١١)

that will be best for you, if ye but knew!

C5444. It would indeed be a great and wonderful bargain to give so little and get so much, if we only knew and understood the comparative value of things-,the sacrifice of our fleeting advantages for forgiveness, the love of Allah, and eternal bliss.

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ...

12. He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow,

... وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٢)

and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity:

that is indeed the supreme Achievement.

وَأُخْرَى تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣)

13. And another (favor will He bestow), which ye do love -- help from Allah and a speedy victory: so give the Glad Tidings to the Believers.

C5445. The supreme Achievement has already been mentioned viz.; the Gardens of Eternity with Allah. But lest that seem too remote or abstract for the understanding of men not strong in faith, another good news is mentioned which the men who first heard this Message could at once understand and appreciate-"which ye do love":

viz.: **Help and Victory**. For all striving in a righteous Cause we get Allah's help: and however much the odds against us may be, we are sure of victory with Allah's help. But all life is a striving or struggle,-the spiritual life even more than any other; and the final victory there is the same as the Garden of Eternity.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونوا أَنصَارَ اللَّهِ ...

14. O ye who believe! be ye helpers of Allah:

C5446. If we seek Allah's help, we must first help Allah's Cause, i.e., dedicate ourselves to Him entirely and without reserve. This was also the teaching of Jesus, as mentioned in this verse.

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24).

... كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ ...

as said Jesus, the son of Mary, to the Disciples,

C5447. See 3:52, and n. 392; and for the Biblical reference, see the last note.

... مَنْ أَنصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ...

"Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?"

The names of the twelve Disciples will be found in Matt. 10:2-4.

... قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنصَارُ اللَّهِ ...

Said the Disciples, "We are Allah's helpers!"

... فَآمَنَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّن بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَكَفَرَت طَّائِفَةٌ ...

Then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved:

... فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَى عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ (١٤)

but We gave power to those who believed against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.

C5448. A portion of the Children of Israel-the one that really cared for Truth-believed in Jesus and followed his guidance. But the greater portion of them were hard hearted, and remained in their beaten track of formalism and false racial pride.

The majority seemed at first to have the upper hand when they thought they had crucified Jesus and killed his Message. But they were soon brought to their senses.

Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70 and the Jews have been scattered ever since. "The Wandering Jew" has become a bye-word in many literatures.

On the other hand, those who followed Jesus permeated the Roman Empire, brought many new races within their circle, and through the Roman Empire, Christianity became the predominant religion of the world until the advent of Islam.

So is it promised to the people of Islam: they must prevail if they adhere to the Truth. Badr (A.H. 2) was a landmark against Pagan Arabia; Qadisiya (A.H. 14) and Madain (A.H. 16) against the might of Persia: Yarmuk (A.H. 15) against the might of the Byzantine Empire in Christian Syria; and Heliopolis (A.H. 19) against the same Empire in Christian Egypt and Africa.

These were symbols in external events.

The moral and spiritual landmarks are less tangible, and more gradual, but none the less real. Mark how the arrogance and power of Priesthood have been quelled;

how superstition and a belief in blind Fate have been checked; how the freedom of human individuals has been reconciled with the sanctity of marriage in the law of Divorce; how the civil position of women has been raised; how temperance and sobriety have been identified with religion; what impetus has been given to knowledge and experimental science; and how economic reconstruction has been pioneered by rational schemes for the expenditure and distribution of wealth.



وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint):
that ye may prosper.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Jumu'ah

الْجُمُعَة

Introduction and Summary

This is the sixth Surah in the Madinah series of short Surahs which began with Surah 57.

The special theme here is the need for mutual contact in the Community for worship and understanding; for the spirit of the Message is for all, ignorant and learned, in order that they may be purified and may learn wisdom.

The date has no special significance: it may be placed in the early Madinah period, say between A.H. 2 and 5.

Summary- The Revelation has come among unlearned men, to teach purity and wisdom not only to them but to others, including those who may have an older Message but do not understand it: meet solemnly for the Assembly (Friday) Prayer, and let not worldly interests deflect you therefrom, (62:1-11, and C. 241).

C.241 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Allah's care for his creatures is universal,
His Revelation is for all--- ignorant
And lowly as well as learned and high-placed---
Now and forever. None can arrogantly
Claim exclusive possession of Allah's gifts;
If they do, search their hearts within, and you
Will find them afraid of Death and Judgement.
Men of Faith! On the Day of Assembly,
When you, hear the call, hasten earnestly
To answer it: leave off business, and join
In common worship and devotion. Then
You may disperse about your ordinary business,
But remember the Praises of Allah always;
It is He alone that can provide
For you every need, and His gifts are best.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare the Praises and Glory of Allah --

C5449. See n. 5408 to 59:24, where I have explained the difference in signification between **sabbaha** and

yusabbihu. The latter form is used here, to express an actual fact. 'Everything declares the Praises and Glory of Allah, because Allah's mercies extend to all His creatures: He sends His Revelation for the benefit of the ignorant and unlettered as well as for those who have learning in their midst, especially as the latter are apt, by the very weight of their ponderous learning, to miss the real point and spirit of Allah's Message.'

... الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (١)

- the Sovereign,
- the Holy One,
- the Exalted in Might,
- the Wise.

C5450. See 59:23, and n. 5402.

Here we have two of the divine attributes repeated from 59:23 and two from the end of 59:24, implying a reminiscence of all the beautiful divine attributes mentioned in that passage.

... هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ

2. It is He Who has sent amongst the **Unlettered** a messenger from among themselves,

C5451. The Unlettered: as applied to a people, it refers to the Arabs, in comparison with the People of the Book, who had a longer tradition of learning, but whose failure is referred to in verse 5 below. As applied to individuals, it means that Allah's Revelation is for the benefit of all men, whether they have worldly learning or not.

... يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ ...

- to rehearse to them **His Signs**,

C5452. His Signs: Allah's wonderful Signs in His Creation and in His ordering of the world. It may include the Verses of the Quran, but they are more specifically referred to as "Book" in the next line but one.

... وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ...

- to sanctify them,
- and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom --

C5453. Cf. 2:129, and n. 129.

Read again the attributes in the last verse.

- Allah is full Sovereign, and therefore cares for all His subjects, including the meanest and most ignorant, and sends Hiss prophets or messengers to them.
- He is the Holy One, and therefore purifies and sanctifies those who were steeped in superstition and wickedness.
- He is Exalted in Power, and therefore He can confer all these blessings on the most unlikely people (verse 3), and no one can stay His hand.
- He is wise, and therefore He instructs in wisdom, both through written Scriptures, and in other ways, e.g., by means of a knowledge of life and its laws, and an understanding of His wonderful universe.

... وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢)

although they had been, before, in manifest error --

C5454. Previous ignorance or error is no bar to a person or nation receiving the blessings of Allah's revelation, provided such person or nation has the will to come to Allah and the capacity to bear His Message. For an instance of incapacity through arrogance, see verse 6 below.

وَآخَرِينَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ ...

3. As well as (to confer all these benefits upon) **others of them,** who have not already joined them:

C5455. Others of them: i.e., others than those among whom the holy Prophet came as a messenger. In other words his Message is for his Arab people and his non-Arab contemporaries as well as those who live in other

ages, and have no personal contact with him or his Companions.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣)

and He is Exalted in Might, Wise.

ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ...

4. Such is the Bounty of Allah, which He bestows on whom He will:

C5456. That is, according to His wise Will and Plan, and also as a result of His unbounded generosity to all.

... وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ (٤)

and Allah is the Lord of the highest bounty.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَاةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا ...

5. The similitude of those who were charged with the (obligations of the) Mosaic Law, but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is that of a donkey which carries huge tomes (but understands them not).

C5457. The Children of Israel were chosen as special vehicles for Allah's Message early in history. When their descendants corrupted the Message and became guilty of all the abominations against which prophets like Isaiah inveighed with such zeal and fire, they merely became like beasts of burden that carry learning and wisdom on their backs but do not understand or profit by it.

... بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ...

Evil is the similitude of people who falsify the Signs of Allah:

وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥)

and Allah guides not people who do wrong.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ هَادُوا ...

6. Say: "O ye that stand on Judaism!

C5458. Standing on Judaism is a very different thing from following the Law and Will of Allah. An arrogant claim to be a chosen people, to be the exclusive possessors of divine teaching, to be exempt from any punishment for breaches of the divine law, (cf. 2:88), is presumptuous blasphemy. It may be Judaism, but it is not in the spirit of Moses.

... إِن زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاء لِلَّهِ مِن دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ إِن

كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٦)

if ye think that ye are friends to Allah, to the exclusion of (other) men, then express your desire for Death, if ye are truthful!"

C5459. Cf. 2:94-96.

If they claimed to be special friends of Allah, why do they not eagerly desire death, which would bring them nearer to Allah?

But of all people they are the most tenacious of this life and the good things of this life! And they know that their grasping selfish lives have run up a score of sin against them, which will meet its recompense.

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٧)

7. But never will they express their desire (for Death), because of the (deeds) their hands have sent on before them!

And Allah knows well those that do wrong!

... قُلْ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِي تَفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلَاقِيكُمْ

8. Say:

"The Death from which ye flee will truly overtake you:

ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٨)

then will ye be sent back to the Knower of things secret and open: and He will tell you (the truth of) the things that ye did!"

C5460. Before Allah's Judgment-Seat, when Judgment is established, we shall see the full inwardness of all deeds

in this world. The veil of illusion and delusion will be torn off. All our secret motives will be laid bare. The results of all our little plots and plans and their reactions on our eternal welfare will be clearly visible to us. All make-believe will disappear.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

9. O ye who believe!

... إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِن يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ ...

when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly),

C5461. Friday, is primarily the Day of Assembly, the weekly meeting of the Congregation, when we show our unity by sharing in common public worship, preceded by a Khutbah, in which the Imam (or Leader) reviews the week's spiritual life of the Community and offers advice and exhortation on good living.

Notice the gradations of social contact for Muslims if they followed the wise ordinances of their Faith.

1. Each individual remembers Allah for himself or herself five or more times every day in the home or place of business, or local mosque, or open air, as the case may be.
2. On Friday in every week there is a local meeting in the central mosque of each local centre,-it may be a village, or town, or ward of a big city.
3. At the two 'Ids every year, there is a large local area meeting in one centre.
4. Once at least in a lifetime, where possible, a Muslim shares in the vast international assemblage of the world, in the centre of Islam, at the Makkan Pilgrimage.

A happy combination of decentralization and centralization, of individual liberty and collective meeting, and contact at various stages or grades. The

mechanical part of this ordinance is easy to carry out. Are we carrying out the more difficult part?

the spirit of unity, brotherhood, mutual consultation, and collective understanding and action? (R).

... فَاسْعَوْا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ...

hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic):

C5462. The idea behind the Muslim weekly "Day of Assembly" is different from that behind the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) or the Christian Sunday.

The Jewish Sabbath is primarily a commemoration of Allah's ending His work and resting on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2; Exod. 20:11):

we are taught that Allah needs no rest, nor does He feel fatigue (2:255). The Jewish command forbids work on that day but says nothing about worship or prayer (Exod. 20:10);

our ordinance lays chief stress on the remembrance of Allah. Jewish formalism went so far as to kill the spirit of the Sabbath, and call forth the protest of Jesus: "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark. 2:27).

But the Christian Church, although it has changed the day from Saturday to Sunday, has inherited the Jewish spirit: witness the Scottish Sabbath; except in so far as it has been secularized.

Our teaching says: 'When the time for Jumuah Prayer comes, close your business and answer the summons loyally and earnestly, meet earnestly, pray, consult and learn by social contact; when the meeting is over, scatter and go about your business'.

... ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٩)

that is best for you if ye but knew!

C5463. The immediate and temporal worldly gain may be the ultimate and spiritual loss, and vice versa.

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ ...

10. And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah:

وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (١٠)

and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that ye may prosper.

C5464. Prosperity is not to be measured by wealth or worldly gains. There is a higher prosperity,-the health of the mind and the spirit.

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انفَضُّوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا ...

11. But when they see some bargain or some amusement, they disperse headlong to it, and leave thee standing.

... قُلْ مَا عِندَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ ...

Say:

"The (blessing) from the Presence of Allah is better than any amusement or bargain!

... وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ (١١)

And Allah is the Best to provide (for all needs)."

C5465. Do not be distracted by the craze for amusement or gain. If you lead a righteous and sober life, Allah will provide for you in all senses, better than any provision you can possibly think of.

وَأَنفِقُوا مِن مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ

And spend something (in charity); out of the substance which We have bestowed on you, before death should come to any of you,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Munafiqun

الْمُنَافِقُونَ

Introduction and Summary

This is the seventh of the ten short Madinah Surahs dealing with a special feature in the social life of the Brotherhood.

The special feature here deal with is the wiles and mischief of the Hypocrite element in any community, and the need of guarding against it and against the temptation it throws in the way of the Believers.

The battle of Uhud (Shawal A.H.3) unmasked the Hypocrites in Madinah: See 3:167, and n. 476. This Surah may be referred to some time after that event, say about 4 A.H. or possibly 5 A.H.

If the words reported in verse 8 were uttered in the expedition against the Banu Mustaliq, A.H. 5, (See n. 5475 below).

Summary- False are the3 oaths of Hypocrites; they only seek selfish ends: Believers should beware of their wiles and strive devotedly always for the Cause (63:1-11, and C. 242).

C.242 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The oaths of Hypocrites are a screen
For their misdeeds. They think they deceive
With their fair exteriors and plausible talk,
But their minds are impervious to the real Truth.
They may plot to withhold from men of God
Such things of this world as they may command;
They may plot to expel and persecute the righteous;
They may call them ill names and slight them,
But to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens
and the earth, and He will bestow according
To His wise and universal Plan. Let not
the world's foolish craze divert the Believers
from the service of Allah--- from good deeds and Charity.
Now in the time; All vain will be
your pleas and your regrets when the shadow
of death cuts off your last chance of Repentance!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ ...

1. When the **Hypocrites** come to thee,

C5466. The hypocrite element, if one exists in any society, is a source of weakness and a danger to its health and its very existence.

When the holy Prophet came to Madinah in Hijrah, his arrival was welcome to all the patriotic citizens: it not only united them in common life and healed their old differences, but it brought honour and light to them in the person of the greatest living Prophet. But there were some baser elements filled with envy. Such hopes as they had entertained of attaining power and leadership by playing on the animosities of the factions were now dashed to the ground. They now began to work underground. For fear of the majority they dared not oppose the new growing Brotherhood of Righteousness. They tried to undermine it by intriguing secretly with its enemies and swearing openly its loyalty to the holy Prophet. They were thoroughly unmasked and discredited at the battle of Uhud.

See 3:167, and n. 476.

... قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ ...

they say, "We bear witness that thou art indeed the Messenger of Allah."

... وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١)

Allah knoweth that thou art indeed His Messenger,

and Allah beareth witness that the Hypocrites are indeed liars.

... اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً

2. They have made their oaths a screen (for their misdeeds):

C5467. Cf. 58:16 and n. 5358.

When they say that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, it is Allah's own truth: but what is in their hearts? Nothing but falsehood.

... فَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ...

thus they obstruct (men) from the Path of Allah:

... إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢)

truly evil are their deeds.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ...

3. That is because they believed, then they rejected Faith:

... فَطُبِعَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٣)

so a seal was set on their hearts: therefore they understand not.

C5468. Cf. 2:7.

Their double-dealing has fogged their understanding.

In Arabic the heart is taken to be the seat of understanding as well as of affection.

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ ...

4. When thou lookest at them, their exteriors please thee;

C5469. The Hypocrites at all times are plausible people, and so were the Hypocrites of Madinah. They present a fine exterior; they dress well; they can usually afford fine equipages; they try to win the confidence of everyone, as they have no scruples in telling lies, and apparently expressing agreement with everyone. There are fair spoken, and as such does not check their tongues, their flattery and deception know no bounds.

But all this is on the outside. As they have no sincerity, nothing that they say or do is worth anything.

... وَإِن يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ...

and when they speak, thou listenest to their words.

...كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ...

They are as (worthless as hollow) pieces of timber propped up, (unable to stand on their own).

C5470. Good timber is strong in itself and can support roofs and buildings. Hollow timber is useless, and has to be propped up against other things. The Hypocrites are like rotten timber. They have no firm character themselves, and for others they are unsafe props to rely upon.

... يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

They think that every cry is against them.

C5471. Their conscience always troubles them. If any cry is raised, they immediately get alarmed, and think it is against themselves. Such men are worse than open enemies.

... هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ ...

They are the enemies; so beware of them.

... قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ (٤)

The curse of Allah be on them!

How are they deluded (away from the Truth)!

... وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

5. And when it is said to them,

"Come, the Messenger of Allah will pray for your forgiveness,"

C5472. Even hypocrisy like other sins can be forgiven by repentance and amendment, provided there is a will and earnest desire to turn from evil and seek the Grace of Allah. In this case there was none.

... لَوَّوْا رُؤُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَهُم مُّسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٥)

they turn aside their heads, and thou wouldst see them turning away their faces in arrogance.

... سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ

6. It is equal to them whether thou pray for their forgiveness or not. Allah will not forgive them.

C5473. The stiff-necked rejecters of Allah's Truth have made a wide gulf between themselves and Allah's Grace. No prayer for them will help them. In the attitude of rebellion and transgression they cannot obtain Allah's forgiveness.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٦)

Truly Allah guides not rebellious transgressors.

هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنفِقُوا عَلَى مَنْ عِندَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنفَضُّوا ...

7. They are the ones who say,

"**Spend nothing on those who are with Allah's Messenger,** to the end that they may disperse (and quit Madinah)."

C5474. The Muhajirun, who had come to be with the holy Prophet in Madinah in exile, were received, helped, entertained by the Ansar (Helpers). The Hypocrites in Madinah did not like this, and tried in underhand ways to dissuade the good folk of Madinah from doing all they could for the exiles. But their tricks did not succeed.

The small Muslim community grew from strength to strength until they were able to stand on their own resources and greatly to augment the resources of their hosts as well. It is goodness that produces strength and prosperity, and Allah holds the keys of the treasures of man's well-being. It is not for Allah's enemies to dole out or withhold the unbounded treasures of Allah.

... وَلِلَّهِ خَزَائِنُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٧)

But to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth; but the Hypocrites understand not.

يَقُولُونَ لَئِن رَّجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ ...

8. They say,

"If we return to Madinah, surely the more honorable (element) will expel there from the meaner."

C5475. Words of this import were spoken by 'Abdullah ibn Ubai, the leader of the Madinah Hypocrites, to or about the Exiles, in the course of the expedition against the Banu Mustaliq in the fourth or fifth year of the Hijrah.

He had hopes of leadership which were disappointed by the coming to Madinah of a man far greater than he. So he arrogated to himself and his clique the title of "the more honourable (element)" and slightingly spoke of the Emigrants as the "meaner" element that had intruded from outside.

... وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٨)

But honor belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the Believers;

but the Hypocrites know not.

Section 2

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ...

9. O ye who believe!

let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah.

... وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (٩)

If any act thus, the loss is their own.

C5476. Riches and human resources of all kinds are but fleeting sources of enjoyment. They should not turn away the good man from his devotion to Allah.

"Remembrance of Allah" includes every act of service and goodness, every kind thought and kind deed, for this is the service and sacrifice which Allah requires of us. If we fail in this, the loss is our own, not any one else's: for it stunts our own spiritual growth.

وَأَنفِقُوا مِن مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ ...

10. And spend something (in charity) out of the **substance** which We have bestowed on you, before death should come to any of you

C5477. "Substance" or **"Sustenance"**. Whatever good we enjoy comes from Allah, and it is our duty to use some of it in the service of others, for that is Charity and the service of Allah. Every unselfish act is Charity. And we must not postpone our good resolutions to the future. Death may come suddenly on us, and we cannot then be allowed to plead for more time. Every present moment calls urgently for its good deed.

... فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠)

and he should say,

"O my Lord! why didst thou not give me respite for a little while?

I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good."

... وَلَن يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا

11. **But to no soul will Allah grant respite** when the time appointed (for it) has come:

C5478. When our limited period of probation is over, we cannot justly ask for more time, nor will more time be given to us then. Procrastination is itself a fault, and Allah knows every hidden thought and motive in our minds.

... وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١١)

and Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do.

إِن تُقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ

If ye loan to Allah a beautiful loan, He will double it to your (credit), and He will grant you Forgiveness:

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Taghabun

التَّغَابُن

Introduction and Summary

This is the eight of the short Madinah Surahs, each dealing with a special aspect of the life of the Community.

The special aspect spoken of here is the mutual gain and loss of god and evil, contrasted in this life in the Hereafter.

It is an early Madinah Surah, of the year 1 of Hijrah or possibly even of the Makkan period just before the Hijrah. (See n. 5494 below).

Summary- Both the Unbelievers and the Believers were created bt the one True God, Who created all and knows all: why should Unbelief and Evil exult in worldly gain when their loss will be manifest in the Hereafter as will be the gains of Believers? (64:1-18, and C. 243).

C.243 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The self-same God created all men,
If some do good and others evil,
And ye wonder how the good do suffer
And the evil thrive, remember the Final
Goal, when true adjustments will
Be made. The gainers here will be
The Losers there, and the Losers Gainers.
Some of this exchange you will see
Even here, in this life, for Unbelievers
Who deny the Hereafter; but in the Hereafter,
Full account and true adjustment
Of good and ill will follow before
The Judgement Seat; nay, Good will get
More than its full reward: for Allah
Is Bounteous, Merciful, Mighty, Wise.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

1. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare the Praises and Glory of Allah:

C5479. Cf. 62:1, and n. 5449.

All things by their very existence proclaim the Glory and the Praises of Allah. He has dominion over all things, but He uses His dominion for just and praiseworthy ends. He

has power over all things: therefore He can combine justice with mercy, and His Plan and Purpose cannot be frustrated by the existence of Evil along with Good in His Kingdom.

... لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ ...

to Him belongs Dominion, and to Him belongs Praise:

... وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١)

and He has power over all things.

... هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَمِنكُم مُّؤْمِنٌ ...

2. It is He Who has created you; and of you are some that are Unbelievers, and some that are Believers:

C5480. It is not that He does not see Rebellion and Evil, nor that He cannot punish them. He created all things pure and good, and if evil crept in by the grant of a limited free-will by Him, it is not unforeseen: it is in His wise and universal Plan, for giving man a chance of rising higher and ever higher.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢)

and Allah sees well all that ye do.

... خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ...

3. He has created the heavens and the earth in just proportions,

and has given you shape, and made your shapes **beautiful**:

C5481. Cf. 40:64, and n. 4440: also 7:11 and n. 996.

In addition to the beauty and grandeur of all God's Creation, He has endowed man with special aptitudes, faculties and capacities, and special excellencies which raise him at his best to the position of vicegerent on earth. **"Beautiful"** also includes the idea of "adapted to the ends for which they were created".

... وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (٣)

and to Him is the final Goal.

C5482. "The final Goal": not only of mankind, but of all things created, whether material or in the realm of ideas and events. All things return to Allah: as they derive their origin from Him, so is the return or destination of all of them to Allah.

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ...

4. He knows what is in the heavens and on earth:

... وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ...

and He knows what ye conceal and what ye reveal:

C5483. Not only does He create and develop and sustain all things; but all thoughts, motives, feelings, ideas, and events are known to Him. Therefore we must not imagine that, if some evil seems to go unpunished, it is not known to Him or has escaped Ms notice. His Plan is wise and good in its fullest compass: sometimes we do not see its wisdom and goodness because we see only a broken fragment of it, as our own intelligence is narrow.

... وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٤)

yes, Allah knows well the (secrets) of (all) hearts.

... أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَبْلُ فَذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ

5. Has not the story reached you, of those who rejected Faith aforetime?

So they tasted the evil result of their conduct;

C5484. "The evil result of their conduct" begins to manifest itself in this very life, either in external events, or in internal restlessness and agonies of conscience. But its culminating force will be seen in the "grievous Penalty" of the Hereafter.

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٥)

and they had a grievous Penalty.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُ كَانَت تَّأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالُوا أَبَشَرٌ يَهْدُونَنَا ...

6. That was because there came to them messengers with Clear Signs, but they said:

"Shall (mere) human beings direct us?"

C5485. This is referred to in a more expanded form in 14:9-11.

... فَكَفَرُوا وَتَوَلَّوا وَّاسْتَغْنَى اللَّهُ ...

So they rejected (the Message) and turned away.

But Allah can do without (them):

...وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ (٦)

and Allah is free of all needs, worthy of all praise.

C5486. Their obedience is not necessary to Allah, nor will their rejection of Truth affect the validity of Truth or injure the progress of Truth. Allah is free of all needs or dependence on any circumstance whatever. He sends His Message for the good of mankind, and it is man who suffers by ignoring, rejecting, or opposing it.

زَعَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن لَّن يُبْعَثُوا...

7. The Unbelievers think that they will not be raised up (for Judgment).

C5487. In other words, they think that there is no future life, and no responsibility for our actions beyond what we see in the present life. If that were true, all the profits of fraud and roguery, which remain unpunished in this world-and many do remain unpunished in this world-will remain with the wicked; and all the losses and pain suffered by integrity and righteousness, if they find no compensation in this life, will never find any compensation. This would be an odd result in a world of justice. We are taught that this is not true,-that it is certain that the balance will be redressed in a better future world; that there will be a resurrection of what we call the dead; and that on that occasion the full import of all we did will be made plain to us, and our moral and spiritual responsibility will be fully enforced.

...قُلْ بَلَى وَرَبِّي لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ...

"Yea, by my Lord, ye shall surely be raised up: then shall ye be told (the truth) of all that ye did.

...وَذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ (٧)

And that is easy for Allah."

... فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنزَلْنَا

8. Believe, therefore, in Allah and His Messenger, **and in the Light which We have sent down.**

C5488. "The Light which We have sent down": i.e., the light of Revelation, the fight of conscience, the light of reason, and every kind of true light by which we may know Allah and His Will. If we play false with any such lights, it is fully known to Allah.

... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (٨)

And Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

... يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ

9. The Day that He assembles you (all) for a day of Assembly --

that will be **a day of mutual loss and gain** (among you).

C5489. The Day of Judgment will truly be **"a Day of Mutual Loss and Gain",** as the title of this Surah indicates. Men who thought they were laying up riches will find themselves paupers in the Kingdom of Heaven. Men who thought they were acquiring good by wrong-doing will find their efforts were wasted; 18:104.

On the other hand the meek and lowly of this life will acquire great dignity and honour in the next; the despised ones doing good here will be the accepted ones there; the persecuted righteous will be in eternal happiness. The two classes will as it were change their relative positions.

...وَمَن يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ ...

And those who believe in Allah and work righteousness -- He will **remove from them their ills,**

C5490. "Remove from them their ills". The ills may be sins, faults, mistakes, or evil tendencies; Allah will of His grace cover them up, and blot out the account against them; or they may be sorrows, sufferings, or disappointments: Allah may even change the evil of such persons into good, their apparent calamities into opportunities for spiritual advancement: 25:70. This is because of their sincere Faith as evidenced by their repentance and amendment.

... وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

and He will admit them to **gardens** beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever:

C5491. "Gardens" the place of the highest Bliss,

see 2:25, n. 44; 13:35; 47:15. (R).

... ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٩)

that will be the Supreme Achievement.

... وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا

10. But those who reject Faith and treat Our Signs as falsehoods, they will be Companions of the Fire, to dwell therein for aye:

... وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٠)

and evil is that Goal.

Section 2

... مَا أَصَابَ مِن مُّصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَن يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ

11. No kind of calamity can occur, except by the leave of Allah:

and if anyone believes in Allah, (Allah) guides his heart (aright):

C5492. What we consider calamities may be blessings in disguise. Pain in the body is often a signal of something wrong, which we can cure by remedial measures. So in the moral and spiritual world, we should in all circumstances hold firmly to the faith that nothing happens without Allah's knowledge and leave; and

therefore there must be some justice and wisdom according to His great universal Plan. Our duty is to find out our own shortcomings and remedy them. If we try to do so in all sincerity of heart, Allah will give us guidance.

... وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (١١)

for Allah knows all things.

... وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ

12. So obey Allah, and obey His Messenger;

... فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (١٢)

but if ye turn back, the duty of Our Messenger is but to proclaim (the Message) clearly and openly.

C5493. The Messenger comes to guide and teach, not to force and compel. The Messenger's teaching is clear and unambiguous, and it is open and free to all.

Cf. also 5:95.

... اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

13. Allah! there is no god but He:

... وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (١٣)

and on Allah, therefore, let the Believers put their trust.

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَّكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ

14. O ye who believe!

truly, among your wives and your children are (some that are) enemies to yourselves: so beware of them!

C5494. In some cases the demands of families, i.e., wife and children may conflict with a man's moral and spiritual convictions and duties. In such cases he must guard against the abandonment of his convictions, duties, and ideals to their requests or desires. But he must not treat them harshly. He must make reasonable provision for them, and if they persist in opposing his clear duties and convictions, he must forgive them and

not expose them to shame or ridicule, while at the same time holding on to his clear duty. Such cases occurred when godly men undertook exile from their native city of Makkah to follow the Faith in Madinah. In some cases their families murmured, but all came right in the end.

... وَإِن تَعْفُوا وَتَصْفَحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١٤)

But if ye forgive and overlook, and cover up (their faults), verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C5495. For the different words for "forgiveness", see n. 110 to 2:109.

... إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ

15. Your riches and your children may be but a trial:

C5496. Children may be a "trial" in many senses:

- their different ways of looking at things may cause you to reflect, and to turn to the highest things of eternal importance;
- their relationship with you and with each other may confront you with problems far more complicated than those in separate individual lives, and thus become a test of your own strength of character and sense of responsibility;
- their conflict with your ideals (see n. 5494 above) may vex your spirit, but may at the same time search out your fidelity to Allah; and
- their affection for you and your affection for them, may be a source of strength for you if it is pure, just as it may be a danger if it is based on selfish or unworthy motives.

So also riches and worldly goods have their advantages as well as dangers.

... وَاللَّهُ عِندَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٥)

but in the Presence of Allah, is the highest Reward.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ ...

16. So

- fear Allah as much as ye can;

C5497. "Fear Allah" combined with **"as much as you can"** obviously means: "lead lives of self-restraint and righteousness": the usual meaning of Taqwa:

see n. 26 to 2:2.

... وَاسْمَعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِّأَنفُسِكُمْ ...

- listen and obey;
- and spend in charity for the benefit of your own souls:

C5498. Charity is meant to help and do good to other people who need it. But it has the highest subjective value for the person who gives it. Like mercy "it blesseth him that gives and him that takes". It purifies the giver's soul: the affection that he pours out is for his own spiritual benefit and progress.

Cf. Coleridge: "He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small, for the Great God Who loveth us, Who made and loveth all".

... وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (١٦)

and those saved from the covetousness of their own souls -- they are the ones that achieve prosperity.

C5499. Cf. 59:9.

Our worst enemy is within ourselves,-the grasping selfishness which would deprive others of their just rights or seize things which do not properly belong to it. If we can get over this covetous selfishness, we achieve real Prosperity in justice and truth.

إِن تُقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ...

17. If ye loan to Allah a beautiful loan, He will double it to your (credit), and He will grant you Forgiveness:

C5500. Cf. 2:245 and n. 276.

Our Charity or Love is called a loan to Allah, which not only increases our credit account manifold, but obtains for us the forgiveness of our sins, and the Capacity for increased service in the future.

... وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (١٧)

for Allah is most Ready to appreciate (service), Most Forbearing --

C5501. Cf. 14:5, n. 1877; and 35:30, n. 3917.

Allah's appreciation of our service or our love goes far deeper than its intrinsic merits or its specific expression on our side. His reward is beyond our deserts, and passes over out defects. He judges by our motives, which He can read through and through: see next verse.

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٨)

18. Knower of what is hidden and what is open, exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom.

C5502. Allah's Appreciation and Forbearing Kindness can reach so far beyond our merits, because

- His universal knowledge comprehends hidden motives, which others cannot see in us;
- His power is so great that He can afford to reward even the unworthy; and
- the Wisdom is so great that He can turn even our weakness into our strength.



The Absolute Reality

وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا

and whosoever fears Allâh and keeps his duty to Him, He will make his matter easy for him.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Talaq

الطلاق

Introduction and Summary

This is the ninth of the ten short Madinah Surahs dealing with the social life of the Community. The aspect dealt with here is Divorce, and the necessity of precautions to guard against its abuse. The relations of the sexes are an important factor in the social life of Community, and this and the following Surah deal with certain aspects of it. "Of all things permitted by law", said the prophet (peace be upon him), "divorce is the most hateful in the sight of Allah". (Abu Dawud, Sunan, 13:3). While the sanctity of marriage is the essential basis of family life, the

incompatibility of individuals and the weaknesses of human nature require certain outlets and safeguards if that sanctity is not to be made into a fetish at the expense of human life. That why the question of Divorce is in this Surah linked with the question of insolent impiety and its punishment.

The date somewhere about A.H. 6, but the chronology has no significance.

Summary- Provision to be made for women in case of Divorce; insolent impiety always leads to punishment (65:1-12), and C.244).

C.244 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Guard well your truth and pure integrity
In sex relation. Keep the tie
Of marriage sacred; but where it must
Be dissolved, use all precautions to ensure
Justice to the weaker party and protect
The interests of unborn or newborn lives
As well as social decency; and close not
To the last the door of reconciliation.
Allah's laws must be obeyed; 'tis man's
Own loss if he deaf to the Voice
Which teaches him, or blind to the Light
Which guides him. Allah's universe
Of beauty and wonder stands strong in wisdom:
Let man but tune himself thereto.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ ...

1. O Prophet!

C5503. Note that in the first instance the Prophet is himself addressed individually, as the Teacher and representative of the Community. Then the actual directions: "when ye ..... : are addressed to the Community collectively.

... إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ ...

when ye do divorce women,

C5504. "Of all things permitted by law, Divorce is the most hateful in the sight of Allah"; see Introduction to this Surah.

The general directions and limitations of Divorce may be studied in 2: 2:228-232, 236-237,241, and notes; also 4:35.

... فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ ...

divorce them at their **prescribed periods**, ...

C5505. **'Iddah**, as a technical term in divorce law, is explained in n. 254 to ii. 228. Its general meaning is "a prescribed period": in that general sense it is used in 2:185 for a prescribed period for fasting.

...وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ ...

...and count (accurately) their prescribed periods: and fear Allah your Lord:

C5506. The **prescribed period** (see last note) is in the interests of the wife, of the husband, of an unborn child (if there is any), and of sex laws in nature, and therefore the elementary dictates of refined human society.

In English Law the six months interval between the decree nisi and the decree absolute in divorce attains the same purpose in a round-about way.

The Commentators suggest that the divorce should not be pronounced during the courses. Read with 2:222, this implies that any incipient differences between husband and wife should not be forced to an issue at a time when sex is least attractive and almost repulsive. Everything should be done to strengthen the social and spiritual aspects of marriage and keep down stray impulses of animal instinct. The parties are to think seriously in a mood of piety, keeping the fear of Allah in their minds.

... لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِن بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا أَن يَأْتِينَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ...

and turn them not out of their houses, **nor shall they (themselves) leave,** except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness.

C5507. As Islam treats the married woman as a full juristic personality in every sense of the term a married woman has a right, in the married state, to a house or apartment of her own. And a house or apartment implies the reasonable expenses for its upkeep and for her own and her children's maintenance. And this is obligatory not only in the married state, but during the 'iddat, which is necessarily a most trying period for the woman. During this period she must not only not be turned out, but it is not decent for her to leave of her own accord, lest the chances of reconciliation should be diminished: see the next note.

... وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ...

Those are limits set by Allah:

... وَمَن يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ ...

and any who transgresses the limits of Allah, does verily wrong his (own) soul:

... لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ أَمْرًا (١)

thou knowest not if perchance Allah will bring about thereafter some new situation.

C5508. A reconciliation is possible, and is indeed recommended at every stage. The first serious difference between the parties are to be submitted to a family council on which both sides are represented (4:35); divorce is not to be pronounced when mutual physical attraction is at an ebb (n. 5506); when it is pronounced, there should be a period of probationary waiting: dower has to be paid and due provision has to be made for many things on equitable terms; every facility has to be given for reconciliation till the last moment, and impediments are provided against hasty impulses leading to rupture. "Thou knowest not if perchance Allah will bring about thereafter some new situation."

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ ...

2. Thus when they fulfil their term appointed, either take them back on equitable terms or part with them on equitable terms;

C5509. Cf. 2:231. Everything should be done fairly and squarely, and all interests should be safeguarded.

... وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوَيْ عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ...

and take for witness two persons from among you, endued with justice, and establish the evidence (as) before Allah.

C5510. Publicity and the establishment of proper evidence ensure that no one will act unjustly or selfishly. All should remember that these are matters of serious import, affecting our most intimate lives, and therefore our position in the spiritual kingdom.

... ذَٰلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ...

Such is the admonition given to him who believes in Allah and the Last Day.

... وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مَخْرَجًا (٢)

And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out,

C5511. In these very delicate and difficult matters, the wisdom of jurists provides a less satisfactory solution than a sincere desire to be just and true, which is described as the "fear of Allah". Where such a desire

exists, Allah often provides a solution in the most unexpected ways or from the most unexpected quarters; e.g., the worst enemies may be reconciled, or the cry or the smile of an infant baby may heal seemingly irreparable injuries or unite hearts seemingly alienated for ever. And Faith is followed at once by a psychological feeling of rest for the troubled spirit.

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ...

3. And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine.

... وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ...

And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا (٣)

For Allah will surely **accomplish His purpose**: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion.

C5512. Our anger and our impatience have to be curbed. Our friends and our mates or associates may seem to us ever so weak and unreasonable, and the circumstances may be ever so disheartening; yet we must trust in Allah. How can we measure our own weakness or perhaps blindness? He knows all. His universal Purpose is always good. His Will must be accomplished, and we should wish for its accomplishment. His ordering of the universe observes a due, just, and perfect proportion.

وَاللَّائِي يَئِسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِن نِّسَائِكُمْ ...

4. Such of your women as have passed the age of monthly courses,

... إِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَاللَّائِي لَمْ يَحِضْنَ ...

for them the prescribed period, if ye have any doubt, is three months, and for those who have no courses (it is the same):

C5513. Cf. 2:228, For normal women, the **'iddah** is the three monthly courses after separation: if there are no courses or if the courses are in doubt, it is three calendar months. But that time it will be clear whether there is

pregnancy: if there is, the waiting period is still after delivery.

... وَأُوْلَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَن يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ...

for those who carry (life within their wombs), their period is until they deliver their burdens:

... وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا (٤)

and for those who fear Allah, He will make their path easy.

C5514. Cf. n. 5511.

If there is a true and sincere desire to obey the Will of Allah and do right the difficulties will vanish, and these delicate matters will be settled for the greatest happiness of all.

ذَٰلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ...

5. That is the Command of Allah, which He has sent down to you:

وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا (٥)

and if anyone fears Allah, **He will remove his ills from him** and will enlarge His reward.

C5515. Allah's ordinance is nothing arbitrary. "It is to help us, and to lead us on to our highest good, temporal and spiritual. If we obey Allah. His wisdom will not only solve our difficulties, but it will remove other ills that we may have, subjective and objective. Like a good shepherd, He will lead us on to more and more luscious pastures. With each step higher, our position becomes more and more sure and our reward more and more precious.

أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنتُم مِّن وُجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ ...

6. Let the women live (in 'iddah) in the same style as ye live, according to your means: annoy them not, so as to restrict them.

C5516. Cf. n. 5507 above.

A selfish man, because he has divorced his wife, may, in the probationary period before the divorce becomes absolute, treat her with contumely, and while giving her residence and maintenance, may so restrict it as to make her life miserable. This is forbidden. She must be provided on the same scale as he is, according to his status in life. There is still hope of reconciliation, and if not, yet the parting must be honourable.

... وَإِن كُنَّ أُولَاتِ حَمْلٍ فَأَنفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ...

And if they carry (life in their wombs), **then** spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden:

C5517. If there is pregnancy, a sacred third life comes on the scene, for which there is added responsibility (perhaps added hope of reconciliation) for both parents. In any case no separation is possible until after the child is born. Even after birth, if no reconciliation between parents is possible, yet for the nursing of the child and for its welfare the care of the mother remains the duty of the father, and there must be mutual counsel between him and the mother in all truth and sincerity.

... فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ ...

and if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense:

... وَأْتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُم بِمَعْرُوفٍ ...

and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable.

... وَإِن تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسَتُرْضِعُ لَهُ أُخْرَى (٦)

And **if ye find yourselves in difficulties**, let another woman suckle (the child) on the (father's) behalf.

C5518. "If ye find yourselves in difficulties": e.g., if the mother's milk fails, or if her health fails, or if any circumstance arises which bars the natural course of the mother nursing her own child. There may be psychological difficulties also.

C5519. That is, the father must stand all expenses, without cutting down the reasonable allowance to which the mother is entitled.

لِيُنفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ ...

7. Let the man of means spend according to his means:

... وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ ...

and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا (٧)

Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief.

C5520. We must trust in Allah, and do whatever is possible for us in the interests of the young life for which we are responsible. We must not be frightened by difficulties. Allah will give us relief and provide a solution if we act with honest integrity.

Cf. 94:5-6.

Section 2

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ ...

8. How many populations that insolently **opposed** the command of their Lord and of His messengers,

C5521. Insolent impiety consists not only in the breach of the rites of religion. Even more vital is the defiance of the laws of nature which Allah has made for us. These laws, for us human beings include those which relate to our fellow-beings in society to whom kindness and consideration form the basis of our social duties. Our duties to our families and our children in intimate matters such as were spoken of in the last Section, are as important as any in our spiritual life. Peoples who forgot the moral law in marriage or family life perished in this world and will have no future in the Hereafter. The lessons apply not only to individuals but to whole nations or social groups.

... فَحَاسَبْنَاهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَاهَا عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا (٨)

did We not then call to account -- to severe account? -- and We imposed on them an exemplary Punishment.

C5522. This refers to the present life: apparently the Hereafter is implied in verse 10 below.

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا (٩)

9. Then did they taste the evil result of their conduct, and the End of their conduct was Perdition.

... أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا

10. Allah has prepared for them a severe Punishment (in the Hereafter).

C5523. See last note.

... فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَدْ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا (١٠)

Therefore fear Allah, O ye men of understanding -- who have believed! -- for Allah hath indeed sent down to you a Message --

C5524. There is no excuse for us to go astray, seeing that Allah in His infinite Mercy has explained to us His Message by His many Signs around us and clearly by means of the human Teachers and Messengers whom He has sent for our instruction:

see next verse.

... رَّسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ

11. A Messenger, who rehearses to you the Signs of Allah containing clear explanations,

... لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ...

that he may lead forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the depths of Darkness into Light.

C5525. Cf. 14:40:

the unbelievers' state is "like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by dark clouds; depths of darkness, one above another."

Cf. 2:257; "Allah is the Protector of those who have Faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light."

... وَمَن يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ...

And those who believe in Allah and work righteousness, He will admit to Gardens beneath which rivers flow,

... خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

to dwell therein forever:

قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِزْقًا (١١)

Allah has indeed granted for them a most excellent provision.

... اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ

12. Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments ....

C5526. "Seven Firmaments."

Cf. 2:29; 17:44; 23:86; and 41:12. [Eds].

... وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ ...

... and of the earth a similar number.

C5527. As there are grades one above the other in the spiritual kingdom, there are similar grades in our life on this earth. If we take the literal meaning - just as we see the heavenly spheres one above another, over our heads, so we can see that the crust of the earth is built up of geological strata one above another. (R).

... يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ...

Through the midst of them (all) **descends** His Command: that ye may know that Allah has power over all things,

C5528. But in all spheres of life and Creation, whatever conception we are able to form of them, it is certain that

the Command or Law of Allah runs through them all, for His knowledge and power extend through all things.

أ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (١٢)

and that Allah comprehends all things in (His) Knowledge.



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا

O you who believe! Turn to Allâh with sincere repentance!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Tahrim

التَّحْرِيْم

Introduction and Summary

This is the tenth and last of the series of short Madinah Surahs which began with Surah 57; see Introduction to that Surah. The point dealt with here is: how far the turning away from sex or the opposition of one sex against another or a want of harmony between the sexes may injure the higher interests of society.

The date may be taken to be somewhere about A.H. 7.

Summary- The failings of the weaker sex should not turn away men from normal social life: harmony and mutual confidence should be taught and enforced, and Allah's blessing will descend

on the virtuous even if their lot is cast with the wicked (66:1-12, and C.245).

C.245 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The relations between the sexes are embittered
By misunderstandings and conflicts that produce
Unhappiness and misery, personal and social.
Harmony and confidence are due between
The sexes, not disgust or isolation, which may
Please some but cause injustice to others.
Respect each other's confidence, and if
You fail, repent and make amends.
The good man seeks virtue for himself
And his family. If Evil is yoked to Good,
It must take the fruit of its own deeds;
The worldly tie will profit naught;
But Good should firmly make a stand
And will be saved, for Allah doth care
For all His true devoted Servants.



يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ ...

1. O Prophet!

   why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has made lawful to thee?

   C5529. The Prophet's household was not like other households. The Consorts of Purity were expected to hold a higher standard in behaviour and reticence than ordinary women, as they had higher work to perform. See n. 3706 to 33:28.

But they were human beings after all, and were subject to the weaknesses of their sex, and they sometimes failed. The commentators usually cite the following incident in connection with the revelation of these verses.

It is narrated from 'Aisha, the wife of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) by Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai. Abu Dawud and others that the holy Prophet usually visited all his wives daily after 'Asr Prayer. Once it so happened that he stayed longer than usual at the quarters of Zaynab bint Jahsh, for she had received from somewhere some honey which the holy Prophet liked very much. "At this", says 'Aisha, "I felt jealous, and Hafsa, Sawda, Safiya, and I agreed among ourselves that when he visits us each of us would tell him that a peculiar odour came from his mouth as a result of what he had eaten, for we knew that he was particularly sensitive to offensive smells".

So when his wives hinted at it, he vowed that he would never again use honey. Thereupon these verses were revealed reminding him that he should not declare to himself unlawful that which Allah had made lawful to him.

The important point to bear in mind is that he was at once rectified by revelation, which reinforces the fact that the prophets are always under divine protection, and even the slightest lapse on their part is never left uncorrected. (R).

... تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ ...

Thou seekest to please thy consorts.

C5530. The tender words of admonition addressed to the Consorts in 33:28-34 explain the situation far better than any comments can express. If the holy Prophet had been a mere husband in the ordinary sense of the term, he could not have held the balance even between his private feelings and his public duties. But he was not an ordinary husband, and he abandoned his renunciation on his realisation of the higher duties with which he was charged, and which required conciliation with firmness.

... وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١)

But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ أَيْمَانِكُمْ ...

2. Allah has already ordained for you, (O men), the dissolution of your oaths (in some cases):

C5531. Cf. 2:224.

If your vows prevent you from doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons, you should expiate the vow, but not refrain from your good deed.

... وَاللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ ...

and Allah is your Protector,

... وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (٢)

and He is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَى بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا ...

3. When the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his consorts,

C5532. Who these two consorts were, and what was the matter in confidence which was disclosed, we are not expressly told, but the facts mentioned in n. 5529 above will help us to understand this passage. The sacred words imply that the matter was of great importance as to the principle involved, but that the details were not of sufficient importance for permanent record. For the lessons to be drawn, see the notes following.

... فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ ...

and she then divulged it (to another), and Allah made it known to him,

... عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهُ وَأَعْرَضَ عَن بَعْضٍ ...

he confirmed part thereof and repudiated a part.

C5533. The moral we have to draw is manifold.

1. If anything is told us in confidence, especially by one at the head of affairs, we must not divulge it to our closest friend.
2. If such divulgence is made in the most secret whispers, Allah's Plan is such that it will come to light and expose those guilty of breach of confidence.
3. When the whispered version is compared with the true version and the actual facts, it will be found that the whispered version is in great part untrue, due to the misunderstanding and exaggeration inevitable in the circumstances.
4. The breach of confidence must inevitably redound to the shame of the guilty party.

See next note

... فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنبَأَكَ هَذَا...

Then when he told her thereof, she said, "Who told thee this?"

... قَالَ نَبَّأَنِيَ الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ (٣)

He said, "He told me who knows and is well-acquainted (with all things)."

... إِن تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا

4. If ye two turn in repentance to Him, your hearts are indeed so inclined;

C5534. There are further lessons.

5. Both the party betraying confidence and that encouraging the betrayal must purge their conduct by repentance.
6. Frank repentance would be what their hearts and conscience themselves would dictate and they must not resist such amends on account of selfish obstinacy.
7. If they were to resist frank repentance and amends, they are only abetting each other's wrong, and they cannot prevail against all the moral forces which will be ranged on the side of the right.

... وَإِن تَظَاهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ مَوْلَاهُ وَجِبْرِيلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ...

but if ye back up each other against him, truly Allah is his Protector, and Gabriel, and (every) righteous one among those who believe --

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ (٤)

and furthermore, the angels -- will back (him) up.

C5535. Do not forget the dual meaning:

immediate, in application to the holy Prophet, and general, being the lesson which we ought all to learn. The holy Prophet could not be injured by any persons doing anything against him even though they might unconsciously put him in great jeopardy: for Allah, the Angel Gabriel (who was the Messenger to him), and the whole Community, would protect him,-to say nothing of the army of angels or hidden spiritual forces that always guarded him.

Cf. 33:56.

The general lemon for us is that the good man's protection is that of the moral forces around him; it is divine protection, against which human weakness or folly will have no power.

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِن طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَن يُبْدِلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنكُنَّ ...

5. It may be, if he divorced you (all), that Allah will give him in exchange Consorts better than you --

C5536. From the case of two in verse 4, we now come to the case of all the Consorts generally, in verse 5.

Cf. 33:28-30.

Their duties and responsibilities were higher than those of other women, and therefore their failure would also be more serious. This is only hypothetical, in order to show us the virtues expected of them: faith and devotion, worship and service, readiness for travel or Hijrah, whether they were young or old, now to married life or otherwise. From them again the more general application follows-to all women in Islam.

... مُسْلِمَاتٍ مُّؤْمِنَاتٍ قَانِتَاتٍ تَائِبَاتٍ عَابِدَاتٍ سَائِحَاتٍ ...

who submit (their wills), who believe, who are devout, who turn to Allah in repentance, who worship (in humility), who travel (for faith) and fast --

C5537. Saihat: literally, those who travel. Here it means those who fast.

Note that the spiritual virtues are named in the descending order: submitting their wills (Islam), faith and devotion, turning ever to worship and faith, and performing other rites, or perhaps being content with asceticism- And this applies to all women, maiden girls or women of mature experience who were widows or separated from previous husbands by divorce.

... ثَيِّبَاتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا (٥)

previously married or virgins.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ...

6. O ye who believe!

C5538. Note how we have been gradually led up in admonition from two Consorts to all consorts, to all women, to all Believers, and to all men and women. We must carefully guard not only our own conduct, but the conduct of our families, and of all who are near and dear to us. For the issues are most serious, and the consequences of a fall are most terrible.

... قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ...

save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones,

C5539. "A Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones."

Cf. 2:24.

This is a terrible Fire: not merely like the physical fire which burns wood or charcoal or substances like that, and consumes them. This Fire will have for its fuel men who do wrong and are as hard hearted as stones, or stone Idols as symbolical of all the unbending Falsehoods in life.

... عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ ...

over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe,

C5540. Cf. 74:31.

We think of the angel nature as gentle and beautiful, but in another aspect perfection includes justice, fidelity, discipline, and the firm execution Of duty according to lawful commands. So, in the attributes of Allah Himself, Justice and Mercy, Kindness and Correction are not contradictory but complementary. An earthly ruler will be unkind to his loyal subjects if he does not punish evil-doers.

... لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ (٦)

who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded.

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ

7. (They will say), "O ye Unbelievers!

make no excuses this day!

إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٧)

Ye are being but requited for all that ye did!"

C5541. 'This is no hardship or injustice imposed on you. It is all but the fruit of your own deeds; the result of your own deliberate choice.'

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

8. O ye who believe!

C5542. The opposition of sex against sex, individual or concerted, having been condemned, we are now exhorted to turn to the Light, and to realise that the good and righteous can retain their integrity even though their mates, in spite of all their example and precept, remain in evil and sin.

...تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ ...

turn to Allah with sincere repentance: in the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills

C5543. Whatever may have been the faults of the past, unite in good deeds, and abandon petty sectional jealousies, and Allah will remove your difficulties and distresses, and all the evils from which you suffer. Indeed He will grant you the Bliss of Heaven and save you from any humiliation which you may have brought on yourselves by your conduct and on the revered Prophet and Teacher whose name you professed to take.

... وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ...

and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow --

... يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ ...

the Day that Allah will not permit to be humiliated the Prophet and those who believe with him.

... نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ ...

Their Light will run forward before them and by their right hands,

C5544. See 57:12, and n. 5288.

The darkness of evil will be dispelled, and the Light of Allah will be realized by them more and more. But even so they will not be content: for they will pray for the least taint of evil to be removed from them, and perfection to be granted to them.

In that exalted state they will be within reach of perfection, -not by their own merits, but by the infinite Mercy and Power of Allah.

... يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ...

while they say,

"Our Lord! perfect our Light for us, and grant us Forgiveness;

... إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٨)

for Thou has power over all things."

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ...

9. O Prophet!

strive hard against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them.

C5545. See 9:73, where the same words introduce the argument against the Hypocrites. Here they introduce the argument against wickedness, which, though given the privilege of association with goodness and piety, persisted in wicked deeds, and in favour of those noble souls, which, though tied to wickedness; retained their purity and integrity. Two examples of each kind are given,-of women, as this Surah is mainly concerned with women.

وَمَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٩)

Their abode is Hell -- an evil refuge (indeed).

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَةَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأَةَ لُوطٍ ...

10. Allah sets forth, for an example to the Unbelievers, the **wife of Noah** and the **wife of Lut:**

C5546. Read Noah's story in 11:36-48.

Evidently his contemporary world had got so corrupt that it needed a great Flood to purge it. "None of the people will believe except those who have believed already. So grieve no longer over their evil deeds."

But there were evil ones in his own family. A foolish and undutiful son is mentioned in 11:42-46. Poor Noah tried to save him and pray for him as one "of his family"; but the answer came: "he is not of thy family; for his conduct is unrighteous". We might expect such a son to have a mother like him, and here we are told that it was so.

Noah's wife was also false to the standards of her husband, and perished in this world and in the Hereafter.

C5547. The wife of Lot has already been mentioned more than once. See 11:81, and n. 1577; 7:83, and n. 1051; etc.

The world around her was wicked, and she sympathized with and followed that wicked world, rather than her righteous husband. She suffered the fate of her wicked world.

... كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ ...

they were (respectively) under two of Our righteous servants,

... فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ...

but **they were false to their** (husbands), and they profited nothing before Allah on their account,

C5548. "Betrayed their husbands": not in sex, but in the vital spiritual matters of truth and conduct. They had the high privilege of the most intimate relationship with the noblest spirits of their age: but if they failed to rise to the height of their dignity, their relationship did not save them. They could not plead that they were the wives of pious husbands. They had to enter Hell like any other wicked women. There is personal responsibility before Allah. One soul cannot claim the merits of another, any more than one pure soul can be injured by association with a corrupt soul. The pure one should keep its purity intact. See the next two examples.

... وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّاخِلِينَ (١٠)

but were told:

"Enter ye the fire along with (others) that enter!"

... وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَةَ فِرْعَوْنَ

11. And Allah sets forth, as an example to those who believe, the wife of Pharaoh:

C5549. Traditionally she is known as 'Asiya, one of the four perfect women, the other three being

- Mary the mother of Jesus,
- Khadija the wife of the holy Prophet, and
- Fatima his daughter.

Pharaoh is the type of arrogance, godlessness, and wickedness. For his wife to have preserved her Faith, her

humility, and her righteousness was indeed a great spirit triumph. She was probably the same who saved the life of the infant Moses: 28:9.

... إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِندَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ ...

Behold, she said: "O my Lord! build for me, in nearness to Thee, a mansion in the Garden,

C5550. Her spiritual vision was directed to Allah, rather than to the worldly grandeur of Pharaoh's court. It is probable that her prayer implies a desire for martyrdom, and it may be that she attained her crown of martyrdom.

... وَنَجِّنِي مِن فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ ...

and save me from Pharaoh and his doings,

... وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (١١)

and save me from those that do wrong;"

... وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا ...

12. And Mary the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity;

C5551. 'Imran was traditionally the name of the father of Mary the mother of Jesus: see n. 375 to 3:35. She was one of the purest of women, though the Jews accused her falsely of unchastity:

Cf. 19:27-28.

... فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِنَا ...

and We breathed into her (body) of Our spirit;

C5552. Cf. 21:91.

As a virgin she gave birth to Jesus: 19:16-29.

In 32:9, it is said of Adam's progeny, man, that Allah "fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit".

In 15:29, similar words are used with reference to Adam.

The virgin birth should not therefore be supposed to imply that Allah was the father of Jesus in the sense in

which Greek mythology makes Zeus the father of Apollo by Latona or of Minos by Europa.

And yet that is the doctrine to which the Christian idea of "the only begotten Son of God" leads.

... وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهِ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَانِتِينَ (١٢)

and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (Servants).

C5553. Mary had true faith and testified her faith in the prophet Jesus and in his revelation as well as in the revelations which he came to confirm (and to foreshadow). She was of the company of the Devout of all ages. The fact that **Qanitin** (devout) is not here in the feminine gender implies that the highest spiritual dignity is independent of sex.

And so we close the lesson of this Surah, that while sex is a fact of our physical existence, the sexes should act in harmony and cooperation for in the highest spiritual matters we are all one. "We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples. Verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me and no other" (21:91-92).



إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ

As for those who fear their Lord unseen, for them is Forgiveness and a great Reward.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Mulk

الْمُلْكُ

Introduction To Surah

We have now done fourteen-fifteenths of Quran, and have followed step by step the development of its argument establishing the *Ummah* or Brotherhood of Islam.

There is a logical break here. The remaining fifteenth consists of short spiritual Lyrics, mostly of the Makkan period, dealing mainly with the inner life of man, and in its individual aspects. They may be compared to Hymns of Psalm in other religious literature. But these short Quranic Surahs have a grandeur, a beauty, a mystic meaning, and a force of earnestness under persecution, all their own. With their sources in the sublimest

regions of heaven; their light penetrates into the darkness recess of Life, into the concrete facts which are often mistaken for the whole of Reality, though they are but an insignificance portion and on the surface and fleeting. There is much symbolism in language and thought, in describing the spiritual in terms of things we see and understand.

It is the contrast between the shadows of Reality here and the eternal Reality, between the surface world and the profound inner World, that is urged on our attention here.

This Surah of 30 verses belongs to the Middle Makkan period, just before Surah 69 and Surah 70. Allah is mentioned here by the name *Rahman* (Most Gracious), as He is mentioned by the names of *Rabb* (Lord and Cherisher) and *Rahman* (Most Gracious) in Surah 19.

C.246 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Lordship in right, and in fact belongs
To Allah Most Gracious, Whose Goodness
And Glory and Power are writ large
On all His Creation. The beauty and order
Of the Heavens above us proclaim Him,
Then who can reject His call but those
In pitiful delusion? And who can fail
To accept, that truly knows himself
And the mighty Reality behind him?
The earth and the good things thereof are prepared
For man by his Gracious Lord, Who guards
Him from hourly dangers. Who sustains
The wonderful flight of the Birds in midair?
Above, and below, and in midair can we see
His boundless Signs. We know that His Promise
Of Hereafter is true. The spring and source
Of the goodness of things is in Him, and will
Appear triumphant when the Hour is established.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ ...

1. **Blessed** be He in Whose hands is **Dominion**:

C5554. What do we mean when we bless the name of Allah, or proclaim (in the optative mood) that the whole Creation should bless the name of the Lord?

We mean that we recognise and proclaim His beneficence to us; for all increase and happiness is through Him, "in His hands', - in the hands of Him Who also holds Dominion or Power. In our human affairs we sometimes see the separation of Dominion or Power from Goodness or Beneficence: in the divine nature we recognise that there is no separation or antithesis.

C5555. Mulk: Dominion, Lordship, Sovereignty, the Right to carry out His Will, or to do all that He wills. Power (in the clause following) is the Capacity to carry out His Will, so that nothing can resist or neutralize it. Here is beneficence completely identified with Lordship and Power; and it is exemplified in the verses following.

Note that **"Mulk"** here has a different shade of meaning from **Malakut** in 36:83.

Both words are from the same root, and I have translated both by the word "Dominion". But **Malakut** refers to Lordship in the invisible World, while **Mulk** to Lordship in the visible World. Allah is Lord of both.

وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١) ...

and He over all things Hath Power --

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ ...

2. He Who created Death and Life,

C5556. "Created Death and Life." Death is here put before Life, and it is created. Death is therefore not merely a negative state.

In 2:28 we read: "Seeing that ye were without life (literally, dead), and He gave you life: then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye retum."

In 53:44, again, Death is put before Life. Death, then, is

- the state before life began, which may be non-existence or existence in some other form:
- the state in which Life as we know it ceases, but existence does not cease; a state of **Barzakh** (23:100), or Barrier or Partition, after our visible Death and before Judgment; after that will be the new Life, which we conceive of under the term Eternity.

... لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ...

that He may try which of you is best in deed:

C5557. Creation, therefore, is not in mere sport, or without a purpose with reference to man. The state before our present life, or the state after, we can scarcely understand. But our present Life is clearly given to enable us to strive by good deeds to reach a nobler state.

... وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ (٢)

and He is the **Exalted** in Might, Oft-Forgiving --

C5558. All this is possible, because Allah is so Exalted in Might that He can perfectly carry out His Will and Purpose, and that Purpose is Love, Mercy, and Goodness to His creatures.

... الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا

3. He Who created the seven **heavens** one above another;

C5559. Cf. 65:12, and n. 5526-27.

The heavens as they appear to our sight seem to be arranged in layers one above another, and ancient astronomy accounted for the motions of the heavenly bodies in an elaborate scheme of spheres. What we are concerned with here is the order and beauty of the vast

spaces and the marvelous bodies that follow regular laws of motion in those enormous spaces in the visible world. From these we are to form some conception of the vastly greater Invisible World, for which we want special spiritual vision.

... مَّا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِن تَفَاوُتٍ ...

no want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of (Allah) Most Gracious,

... فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِن فُطُورٍ (٣)

so turn thy vision again:

Seest thou any flaw?

... ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ ...

4. **Again turn thy vision** a second time;

C5560. Reverting to the indication of the external or visible world, we are asked to observe and study it again and again, and as minutely as our powers will allow. However closely we observe it, we shall find no flaw in it. Indeed the region of enquiry is so vast and stretches so far beyond our ken, that our eyes, aided with the most powerful telescopes, will confess themselves defeated in trying to penetrate to the ultimate mysteries. We shall find no defect in Allah's handiwork: it is our own powers that we shall find fail to go beyond a certain compass.

... يَنقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ (٤)

(thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out.

... وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاء الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ ...

5. And We have, (from of old), adorned the **lowest heaven** with Lamps,

C5561. "Lowest (or nearest) heaven":

see n. 4035 to 37:6.

... وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِّلشَّيَاطِينِ ...

and We have made such (Lamps) (as) **missiles to drive away** the Evil Ones,

C5562. The phenomenon of the shooting stars has been, explained in 15:16-18, notes 1951-54; and in 37:6-10, and notes thereon. (R).

وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ (٥)

and have prepared for them the Penalty of the Blazing Fire.

وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ ...

6. For those who reject their Lord (and Cherisher) ...

C5563. We have seen how the fire in the stars can suggest the beauty and order of the external world-, and yet, when it meets with resistance and disharmony, it can burn and destroy. So in the moral and spiritual world. What can be a greater sign of evil, disharmony, and rebellion than to reject the Cherisher and Sustainer, on Whom our life depends, and from Whom we receive nothing but goodness?

The Punishment, then, is Fire in its fiercest intensity, as typified in the next two verses.

... عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٦)

... is the Penalty of Hell: and evil is (such) destination.

إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ (٧)

7. When they are cast therein, they will hear **the (terrible) drawing** in of its breath even as it blazes forth.

C5564. For **shahiq** see n. 1607 to 11:106.

There **shahiq** (sobs) was contrasted with **zafir** (sighs): in the one case it is the drawing in of breath, and in the other the emission of a deep breath. Here the latter process is represented by the verb **fara**, to swell, to blaze forth, to gush forth.

In 11:40, the verb **fara** was applied to the gushing forth of the waters of the Flood; here the verb is applied to the blazing forth of the Fire of Punishment. Fire is personified: in its in-take it has a fierce appetite; in the flames which it throws out, it has a fierce aggressiveness. And yet in ultimate result evil meets the same fate, whether typified by water or fire.

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ...

8. Almost bursting with fury:

... كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ (٨)

every time a Group is cast therein, its Keepers will ask,

"Did no Warner come to you?"

C5565. Cf. 39:71, and n. 4348.

"Every time": it may not be the same angels who are guarding the gates of Hell every time new inmates come in. The pure, innocent angel nature does not know the crookedness of human evil, and is surprised at so many human beings coming in for punishment: it wonders if no warning was conveyed to men, whereas in fact men have a seaming in Clear Signs during all the period of their probation. The Clear Signs come from Revelation, from their own conscience, and from all nature around them.

قَالُوا بَلَى قَدْ جَاءنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ ...

9. They will say:

"Yes indeed: a Warner did come to us, but we rejected him and said, '

Allah never sent down any (Message):

إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ (٩)

ye are in nothing but an egregious delusion!' "

C5566. Allah's Signs were not only rejected or defied, but their very existence was denied.

Nay, more, even their possibility was denied, and alas! righteous people and Prophets were persecuted or mocked (36:30). They were called fools or madmen, or men under a delusion!

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١٠)

10. They will further say:

"Had we but listened or **used our intelligence**, we should not (now) be among the Companions of the Blazing Fire!"

C5567. Man has himself the power given to him to distinguish good from evil, and he is further helped by the teachings of the great Messengers or World Teachers. Where such Teachers do not come into personal contact with an individual or a generation, the true meaning of their teaching can be understood by means of the Reason which Allah has given to every human soul to judge by. It is failure to follow a man's light sincerely that leads to his degradation and destruction.

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنبِهِمْ ...

11. **They will then confess** their sins:

C5568. They will then have passed through the fire of Judgment and will now be in the fire of Punishment. The Reality will not only now be clear to them, but after the questionings of the angels they cannot even pretend to make any excuses. They will freely confess, but that is not repentance, for repentance implies amendment, and the time for repentance and amendment will have long been past.

... فَسُحْقًا لِّأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١١)

but far will be (Forgiveness) from the Companions of the Blazing Fire!

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ

12. As for those who fear their Lord **unseen**,

C5569. See n. 3902 to 35:18.

Read **"unseen"** adverbially.

To fear the Lord is to love Him so intensely that you fear to do anything which is against His Will, and you do it because you realise Him intensely in your hearts, though you do not see Him with your bodily senses. Nor is it of any consequences whether other people see your love or the consequences that flow from your love, for your good deeds are for the love of Allah and not for show in the eyes of men. Such intensity of love obtains forgiveness for any past, and is indeed rewarded with Allah's love, which is immeasurably precious beyond any merits you may possess.

... لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (١٢)

for them is Forgiveness and a great Reward.

وَأَسِرُّوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (١٣)

13. And whether ye hide your word or publish it, He certainly has (full) knowledge, of the secrets of (all) hearts.

... أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ

14. Should He not know -- He that created?

... وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ (١٤)

And He is the One that understands the finest mysteries (and) is well-acquainted (with them).

C5570. He Who creates must necessarily know His own handiwork. But lest we should measure His knowledge by such imperfect knowledge as we possess. His knowledge is further characterized as understanding the finest mysteries and being well acquainted with them **(Latif and Khabir):**

See 22:63. n. 2844.

Section 2

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا ...

15. It is He Who has made the earth **manageable** for you,

C5571. Dhalul is used in 2:71 for an animal trained and tractable: here it is used to qualify the earth, and I have translated **'manageable'**.

Man has managed to make paths through deserts and over mountains: through rivers and seas by means of ships; through the air by means of airways; he has made bridges and tunnels and other means of communication. But this he has only been able to do because Allah has given him the necessary intelligence and has made the earth tractable to that intelligence.

... فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ ...

so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes:

... وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ (١٥)

but unto Him is the **Resurrection**.

C5572. In describing Allah's gifts and mercies and watchful care in this our temporary sojourn on this earth, it is made clear that the ultimate end is the Hereafter. The real Beyond, which is the goal, is the life after the **Resurrection**.

أَأَمِنتُم مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ (١٦)

16. Do ye feel secure that He Who is in heaven will not cause you **to be swallowed up** by the earth when it shakes (as in an earthquake)?

C5573. Cf. 17:68. and n. 2263.

Also Cf. the story of Qarun in 28:76-82.

If we feel safe on land, it is because Allah has made this earth amenable, manageable and serviceable to us (verse 15 above). But if we defy Allah and break Ms Law, have we any security that even this comparatively unimportant safety in a fleeting world will last? Looking at it from a purely physical point of view, have there not been dreadful earthquakes, typhoons, and tornadoes?

أَمْ أَمِنتُم مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ...

17. Or do ye feel secure that He Who is in Heaven will not send against you **a violent tornado** (with showers of stones),

C5574. Cf. 17:68; and 29:40, n. 3462. Such a violent wind destroyed the wicked Cities which defied Lut's warning.

...فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ (١٧)

so that ye shall know how (terrible) was My warning?

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (١٨)

18. But indeed men before them rejected (My warning):
then how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)?

C5575. Cf. 22:42-44, and n. 2822.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ ...

19. Do they not observe the birds above them,

C5576. The flight of birds is one of the most beautiful and wonderful things in nature. The make and arrangement of their feathers and bones, and their stream-line shapes, from beak to tail, are instances of purposive adaptation. They soar with outstretched wings; they dart about with folded wings; their motions upwards and downwards, as well as their stabilization in the air, and when they rest on their feet, have given many ideas to man in the science and art of aeronautics.

But who taught or gave to birds this wonderful adaptation?

None but Allah, Whose infinite Mercy provides for every creature just those conditions which are best adapted for its life.

... صَافَّاتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ ...

spreading their wings and folding them in?

C5577. In the Arabic, there is an artistic touch which it is not possible to reproduce in the translation. **Saffat** (spreading their wings) is in the form of the active participle, suggesting the continuous soaring on outspread wings; while **yaqbidhna** (folding them in) is in the Aorist form, suggesting the spasmodic flapping of wings.

... مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ ...

None can uphold them except (Allah) Most Gracious:

إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ (١٩)

truly it is He that watches over all things.

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُندٌ لَّكُمْ يَنصُرُكُم مِّن دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ ...

20. Nay, who is there that can help you, (even as) **an army**, besides (Allah) Most Merciful?

C5578. Not the greatest army that man can muster is of any use against the Wrath of Allah; while the constant watchful care of Allah is all-in-all to us, and we can never do without it. If the godless wander about in search for blessings otherwise than in the Mercy and Grace of Allah, they are wandering in vain delusions.

... إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ (٢٠)

In nothing but delusion are the Unbelievers.

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ ...

21. Or who is there that can provide you with **Sustenance** if He were to withhold His provision?

C5579. "Sustenance" here, as elsewhere, (e.g., in 16:73, n. 2105), refers to all that is necessary to sustain and develop life in all its phases. Allah Most Gracious is the Source of all our Sustenance, and if we persist in looking to Vanities for our Sustenance, we are pursuing a mirage, and, if we examine the matter, we are only following obstinate impulses of rebellion and impiety.

... بَل لَّجُّوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ (٢١)

Nay,

they obstinately persist in insolent impiety and flight (from the Truth).

أَفَمَن يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَى ...

22. Is then one who walks headlong, with his face grovelling, better guided --

C5580. Cf. 27:90, and n. 3320.

The man of probity is the man who walks evenly on a Straight Way, his feet guided by Allah's Light and his heart sustained by Allah's Mercy. The man who chooses evil grovels, with his face down, in paths of Darkness, stumbling on the way, and in constant distrust and fear,

the fear of Evil. The two kinds of men are poles apart, although they five on the same earth, see the same Sips, and are fed with the same Mercies from Allah.

... أَمَّن يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٢٢)

or one who walks evenly on a Straight Way?

C5581. Like Abraham trying to guide his unbelieving father: Cf. 19:43.

... قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي

23. Say: "It is He Who ...

C5582. The Prophet is asked to draw constant attention to Allah, the source of all growth and development, the Giver of the faculties by which we can judge and attain to higher and higher spiritual dignity. And yet, such is our self-will, we use our faculties for wrong purposes and thus show our ingratitude to Allah.

... أَنشَأَكُمْ ...

... has created you (and made you grow),

C5583. For **anshaa** see n. 923 to 6:98.

... وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ...

and made for you the faculties of

- hearing,
- seeing,
- feeling and
- understanding:

... قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (٢٣)

little thanks it is ye give."

... قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ

24. Say:

"It is He Who has multiplied you through the earth,

C5584. Mankind, from one set of parents, has been multiplied and scattered through the earth. Men have not only multiplied in numbers but they have developed different languages and characteristics, inner and outer. But they will all be gathered together at the End of Things, when the mischief created by the wrong exercise of man's will be cancelled, and the Truth of Allah will reign universally.

... وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢٤)

and to Him shall ye be gathered together."

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٥)

25. They ask: When will this promise be (fulfilled)? If ye are telling the truth.

C5585. The Unbelievers are skeptical, but they are answered in the next two verses.

... قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِندَ اللَّهِ

26. Say:

"As to the knowledge of the time, it is with Allah alone:

C5586. The Judgment is certain to come. But when it will exactly come, is known to Allah alone. The Prophet's duty is to proclaim that fact openly and clearly. It is not for him to punish or to hasten the punishment of evil.

Cf. 22:47-49.

... وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢٦)

I am (sent) only to warn plainly in public."

... فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سِيئَتْ وُجُوهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقِيلَ

27. At length, **when they see it close at hand**, grieved will be the faces of the Unbelievers, and it will be said (to them):

C5587. "It", i.e., the fulfilment of the promise, the Day of Judgment. When it is actually in sight, then the Unbelievers realise that those whom they used to laugh at for their Faith were in the right, and that they themselves, the skeptics, were terribly in the wrong.

... هَذَا الَّذِي كُنتُم بِهِ تَدَّعُونَ (٢٧)

"This is (the promise fulfilled), which ye were calling for!"

C5588. They had defiantly asked for it. Now that it has come near, and it is too late for repentance, there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth".

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَهْلَكَنِيَ اللَّهُ وَمَن مَّعِيَ ...

28. Say: "See ye? -- if Allah were to destroy me, and those with me,

C5589. The skeptics might say and do say to the righteous: "Ah well! if calamities come, they involve the good with the bed, just as you say that Allah showers His mercies on both good and evil!"

The answer is: "Don't you worry about us: even supposing we are destroyed, with all who believe with us, is that any consolation to you?

Your sins must bring on you suffering, and nothing can ward it off . If we get any sorrows or sufferings, we take them as a mere trial to make us better, for we believe in Allah's goodness and we put our trust in Him." See next verse.

... أَوْ رَحِمَنَا ...

or if He bestows His Mercy on us --

... فَمَن يُجِيرُ الْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٨)

yet who can deliver the Unbelievers from a grievous Penalty?"

قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ آمَنَّا بِهِ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ...

29. Say: "He is (Allah) Most Gracious: we have believed in Him, and on Him have we put our trust:

... فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٩)

so soon will ye know which (of us) it is that is in manifest error."

C5590. See the end of the last note.

"Our Faith tells us that Allah will deliver us from all harm if we sincerely repent and lead righteous lives. You,

Unbelievers, have no such hope. When the real adjustment of values is established, you will soon see whether we were in the wrong or you!"

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَن يَأْتِيكُم بِمَاءٍ مَّعِينٍ (٣٠)

30. Say: "See ye? --

if your **stream be some morning lost** (in the underground earth), who then can supply you with clear-flowing water?"

C5591. The Surah is closed with a parable, taken from a vital fact of our physical life, and leading up to the understanding of our spiritual life.

In our daily life, what would happen if we woke up some fine morning to find that the sources and springs of our water-supply had disappeared and gone down into the hollows of the earth? Nothing could save our life.

Without water we cannot live, and water cannot rise above its level, but always seeks a lower-level. So in spiritual fife. Its sources and springs are in the divine wisdom that flows from on high.

Allah is the real source of that life, as He is of all forms of life. We must seek His Grace and Mercy. We cannot find grace or mercy or blessing from anything lower. His Wisdom and Mercy are like, fresh clear-flowing spring-water, not like the muddy murky wisdom and goodness of this lower world which is only relative, and which often hampers life rather than advances it.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Verily it is thy Lord that knoweth best, which (among men) hath strayed from His Path: and He knoweth best those who receive (True) Guidance.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Qalam

القلم

Introduction and Summary

This is very early Makkan revelation. The general opinion of Muslim Commentary is that a great part of it was second in order of revelation, the first being Surah 96 (Iqra) verses 1-5.

The last Surah having defined the true Reality in contrast with the false standards set up by men, this illustrates the theme by an actual historical example. Our Holy Prophet was the sanest and wisest of men: those who could not understand him called

him mad or possessed. So, in every age, it is the habit of the world to call Truth Falsehood and Wisdom Madness, and, on the other hand, to each Selfishness as Planning, and Arrogance as Power. The contrast is shown up between the two kinds of men and their real inner worth.

Summery--- Let the good carry on their work, in spite of abuse of Companions of Evil: let all remember Allah, before Whom all men are on trial (68:1-33), and and C. 247).

True Judgement comes from Allah, and not from the false standards of men (68:34-52) and C248).

C.247 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(68:1-33)

The Pen is the symbol of the permanent Record,
The written Decree, the perfect Order
In the government of the world. And by that token,
The man of Allah comes with a Plan
And Guidance that must win against
All destruction. Truth is high above Slander,
But men must be tried against selfishness
And overweening confidence in themselves
Such as would lead them to forget Allah
And His providence---like the brothers who built
Castles in the air about their garden
And found in desolate in one night's storm.
But repentance brought them forgiveness;
Thus work the Wrath and the Mercy of Allah.

ن ...

1. Nun.

C5592. Nun is an Abbreviated Letter: see Appendix I at the end of Surah 2.

Nun may mean a fish, or an ink-holder, or it may be just the Arabic letter of the alphabet, N. In the last case, it may refer to either or both of the other meanings.

Note also that the Arabic rhyme in this Sura ends in N. The reference to ink would be an appropriate link with the Pen in verse 1. The reference to the fish would be appropriate with reference to the story of Jonah in verses 48-50. Jonah's title is "the Companion of the Fish", (Zun-Nun, 21:87), as he was, in the story, swallowed by the Fish.

... وَالْقَلَمِ ...

By the Pen ...

C5593. The Pen and the Record are the symbolical foundations of the Revelation to man. The adjuration by the Pen disposes of the flippant charge that Allah's Messenger was mad or possessed. For he spoke words of power, not incoherent, but full of meaning, and through the Record of the Pen, that meaning unfolds itself, in innumerable aspects to countless generations. Muhammad was the living Grace and Mercy of Allah, and his very nature exalted him above abuse and persecution.

... وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ (١)

... and by the (Record) which (men) write --

مَا أَنتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُونٍ (٢)

2. Thou art not, by the grace of thy Lord, mad or possessed.

C5594. People usually call any one mad whose standards are different from their own. And madness is

believed to be due to demoniacal possession, an idea distinctly in the minds of the New Testament writers: for Luke speaks of a man from whom the "devils" were cast out, as being then "clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke, 8:35).

وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ (٣)

3. Nay, verily for thee is a Reward unfailing:

C5595. Instead of being out of his right mind, the Prophet of Allah had been raised to a great spiritual dignity, a reward that was not like an earthly reward that passes away, but one that was in the very core of his being, and would never fail him in any circumstances. He was really granted a nature and character far above the shafts of grief or suffering, slander or persecution.

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ (٤)

4. And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character.

فَسَتُبْصِرُ ...

5. Soon wilt thou see ...

C5596. Though Al-Mustafa's nature raised him above the petty spite of his contemporaries, an appeal is made to their reason and to the logic of events. Was it not his accusers that were really mad? What happened to Walid ibn Mugaira, or Abu Jahl, or Abu Lahab? -and to Allah's Messenger and those who followed his guidance? The world's history gives the answer. And the appeal is not only to his contemporaries, but for all time.

... وَيُبْصِرُونَ (٥)

... and they will see,

بِأَيِّيكُمُ الْمَفْتُونُ (٦)

6. Which of you is afflicted with madness.

... إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ

7. Verily it is thy Lord that knoweth best, which (among men) hath strayed from His Path:

... وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (٧)

and **He knoweth best** those who receive (True) Guidance.

C5597. Men set up false standards of judgment. The right standard is that of Allah. For Ms knowledge is complete and all-embracing; He reads hidden motives as well as things that appear before men's sight; and He knows the past history in which the roots of present actions are embedded, as well as the future consequences of present actions.

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٨)

8. So hearken not to those who deny (the Truth).

C5598. The enemies of Allah's truth are sometimes self-deceived. But quite often they have a glimmering of the truth in spite of their desire to shut their eyes. Then they compromise, and they would like the preachers of inconvenient truths to compromise with them. On those terms there would be mutual laudation. This easy path of making the best of both worlds is a real danger or temptation to the best of us, and we must be on our guard against it if we would really enter into the company of the Righteous who submit their wills to the Will of Allah. Abu Jahl freely offered impossible compromises to the holy Prophet.

وَدُّوا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ (٩)

9. Their desire is that thou shouldst be pliant; so would thy be pliant.

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ (١٠)

10. Heed not the type **of despicable man -- ready with oaths**.

C5599. The type of each of these hatful qualities is not uncommon, though the combination of all in one man makes him peculiarly despicable, as was Walid ibn Mugaira, who was a ringleader in calumniating our Prophet and who came to an evil end not long after the battle of Badr, in which he received injuries.

C5600. It is only liars who swear on all occasions, small or great, because their word is not believed in. The true man's word, according to the proverb, is as good as his bond.

هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّاء بِنَمِيمٍ (١١)

11. A slanderer, going about with calumnies.

مَنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ (١٢)

12. (Habitually) hindering (all) good, transgressing beyond bounds, deep in sin.

عُتُلٍّ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ زَنِيمٍ (١٣)

13. **Violent** (and cruel) -- with all that, base-born --

C5601. Besides the self-deceiver and the easy-going man, there is a third type, even more degraded. He has no idea of truth or sincerity. He is ready to swear friendship with every one and fidelity to every cause. But at the same moment he will slander and backbite, and cause mischief even between good but credulous persons. Evil seems to be his goal, and good his evil. He will not only pursue evil courses himself but prevent other people from doing right. When checked, he resorts to violence. In any case, he will intrude where he has no right, claiming relationship or power or consideration in circles which would gladly disown him. He is vain of his wealth or because he has a large following at his beck and call. Religion is to him merely old-fashioned superstition.

أَن كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ (١٤)

14. **Because** he possesses wealth and (numerous) sons.

C5602. "Because may connect with heed not" in verse 10, or with "violent and cruel" in verse 13.

In the former case, we construe: 'Pay no attention to despicable men of the character described, simply because they happen to have wealth or influence, or much backing in man-power.

In the latter case, we construe: the fellow is violent and cruel, he is puffed up with his wealth or riches or backing in man-power'.

In the eyes of Allah such a man is in any case branded and marked out as a sinner.

إِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا ...

15. When to him are rehearsed Our Signs,

C5603. Allah's Signs, by which He calls us, are everywhere-in nature and in our very heart and soul. In Revelation, every verse is a Sign, for it stands symbolically for far more than it says. "Sign" (Ayat) thus becomes a technical term for a verse of the Quran.

... قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٥)

"Tales of the Ancients," he cries.

C5604. Cf. 6:25.

سَنَسِمُهُ عَلَى الْخُرْطُومِ (١٦)

16. Soon shall We brand (the beast) on the snout!

C5605. literally, proboscis, the most sensitive limb of the elephant. The sinner makes himself a beast and can only be controlled by his snout.

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَاهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ ...

17. Verily We have tried them as We tried the people of the Garden

C5606. "Why do the wicked flourish?" is a question asked in all ages. The answer is not simple. It must refer to

- the choice left to man's will,
- his moral responsibility,
- the need of his tuning his will to Allah's Will,
- the patience of Allah, which allows the widest possible chance for the operation of

- His Mercy, and
- in the last resort, to the nature of the Punishment, which is not a merely abrupt or arbitrary act, but a long, gradual process, in which there is room for repentance at every stage.

All these points are illustrated in the remarkable Parable of the People of the Garden, which also illustrates the greed, selfishness, and heedlessness of man, as well as his tendency to throw the blame on others if he can but think of a scapegoat.

All these foibles are shown, but the Mercy of Allah is boundless, and even after the worst sins and punishments, there may be hope of an even better orchard than the one lost, if only the repentance is true, and there is complete surrender to Allah's Will. But if, in spite of ail this, there is no surrender of the will, then, indeed, the punishment in the Hereafter is something incomparably greater than the little calamities in the Parable.

... إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ (١٧)

when they resolved to gather the fruits of the (garden) in the morning.

وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ (١٨)

18. But made no reservation, ("If it be Allah's Will").

C5607. We must always remember, in all our plans, that they depend for their success on how far they accord with Allah's Will and Plan. His universal Will is supreme over all affairs.

These foolish men had a secret plan to defraud the poor of their just rights, but they were put into a position where they could not do so. In trying to frustrate others, they were themselves frustrated.

... فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ

19. So there came, on the (garden) a visitation from thy from thy Lord,

C5608. It was a terrible storm that blew down and destroyed the fruits and the trees. The whole place was changed out of all recognition.

... وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ (١٩)

(which swept away) all around, while they were asleep.

فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ (٢٠)

20. So the (garden) became, by the morning, like a dark and desolate spot, (whose fruit had been gathered).

فَتَنَادَوا مُصْبِحِينَ (٢١)

21. As the morning broke, they called out, one to another --

... أَنِ اغْدُوا عَلَى حَرْثِكُمْ

22. "Go ye to your tilth (betimes) in morning, ...

C5609. Awaking from sleep, they were not aware that the garden had been destroyed by the storm overnight. They were in their own selfish dreams: by going very early, they thought they could cheat the poor of their share. See next note.

... إِن كُنتُمْ صَارِمِينَ (٢٢)

.. if ye would gather the fruits."

فَانطَلَقُوا وَهُمْ يَتَخَافَتُونَ (٢٣)

23. So they departed, conversing in secret low tones, (saying) --

أَن لَّا يَدْخُلَنَّهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُم مِّسْكِينٌ (٢٤)

24. "Let not a **single indigent person** break in upon you into the (garden) this day."

C5610. The poor man has a right in the harvest-whether as a gleaner or as an artisan or a menial in an Eastern village. The rich owners of the orchard in the Parable wanted to steal a march at an early hour and defeat this right, but their greed was punished, so that it led to a greater loss to themselves. They wanted to cheat but

had not the courage to face those they cheated, and by being in the field before any one was up they wanted to make it appear to the world that they were unconscious of any rights they were trampling on.

وَغَدَوْا عَلَى حَرْدٍ قَادِرِينَ (٢٥)

25. And they opened the morning, strong in an (unjust) resolve.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُّونَ (٢٦)

26. But when they saw the (garden), they said:

"We have surely lost our way:

C5611. Their fond dreams were dispelled when they found that the garden had been changed out of all recognition. It was as if they had come to some place other than their own smiling garden. Where they had expected to reap a rich harvest, there was only a howling wilderness. They reflected. Their first thought was of their own personal loss, the loss of their labour and the loss of their capital. They had plotted to keep out others from the fruits: now, as it happened, the loss was their own.

بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ (٢٧)

27. "Indeed we are shut out (of the fruits of our labor)!"

C5612. Cf. 56:67. Also see last note.

قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ ...

28. Said one of them, more just (than the rest):

C5613. This was not necessarily a righteous man, but there are degrees in guilt. He had warned them, but he had joined in their unjust design.

... أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ (٢٨)

"Did I not say to you, 'Why not glorify (Allah)?' "

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٢٩)

29. They said:

"Glory to our Lord! Verily we have been doing wrong!"

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَلَاوَمُونَ (٣٠)

30. Then they turned, one against another, in reproach.

C5614. When greed or injustice is punished people are ready to throw the blame on others. In this case, one particular individual may have seen the moral guilt of defying the Will of Allah and the right of man, but if he shared in the enterprise in the hope of profit, he could not get out of all responsibility.

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا طَاغِينَ (٣١)

31. They said:

"Alas for us! We have indeed transgressed!

عَسَى رَبُّنَا أَن يُبْدِلَنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا رَاغِبُونَ (٣٢)

32. "It may be that our Lord will give us in exchange a better (garden) than this:

for we do turn to Him (in repentance)!"

C5615. If the repentance was true, there was hope. For Allah often turns a great evil to our good. If not true, they only added hypocrisy to their other sins. The Parable presupposes that the garden came into the possession of selfish men, who were so puffed up with their good fortune that they forgot Allah. That meant that they also became harsh to their fellow-creatures. In their arrogance they plotted to get up early and defeat the claims of the poor at harvest time. They found their garden destroyed by a storm. Some reproached others, but those who sincerely repented obtained mercy. The **"better garden"** may have been the same garden, flourishing in a future season under Allah's gift of abundance.

كَذَٰلِكَ الْعَذَابُ ...

33. Such is the Punishment (in this life);

... وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ ...

but greater is the Punishment in the Hereafter --

C5616. Even in this life the punishment for heedless or selfish arrogance and sin comes suddenly when we least expect it. But there is always room for Allah's Mercy if we sincerely repent. If the Punishment in this fife seems to us so stupefying, how much worse will it be in the Hereafter, when the Punishment will not be only for a limited time, and the time for repentance will have passed?

... لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٣)

if only they knew!

C.248 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(68:34-52)

To evil and good there can never be the same
End: no authority can the unjust produce
For their false imaginings. In shame
Will they realise this on the Day when all
Illusion will vanish and they find that the time
For repentance is pass. The good man should wait
And should never lose patience, even though
Things go dead against him. Jonah suffered
In agony, but his sincere repentance
Brought him the grace of his Lord, and he
Joined the company of the Righteous;
For Truth is firm and unshaken, is calm
And works good, through all Allah's Creation.

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ (٣٤)

34. Verily, for the righteous **are Gardens of Delight**, in the Presence of their Lord.

C5617. The Garden is a joy, but the joy of this Garden is the sense of nearness to Allah.

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ (٣٥)

35. Shall We then treat the People of Faith like the People of Sin?

C5618. The spiritual arrogance which rejects faith in Allah is perhaps the worst Sin, because it makes itself impervious to the Mercy of Allah, as a bed of clay is impervious to the absorption of water. It sets up its own standards and its own will, but how can it measure or bind the Will of Allah?

It sets up its own fetishes,-idols, priests, gods, or godlings. The fetishes may be even God-given gifts or faculties.

Intellect or Science, if pushed up to the position of idols. If they are made rivals to Allah, question them:

Will they solve Allah's mysteries, or even the mysteries of Life and Soul?

مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (٣٦)

36. What is the matter with you?
How judge ye?

أَمْ لَكُمْ كِتَابٌ فِيهِ تَدْرُسُونَ (٣٧)

37. Or have ye a Book through which ye learn --

إِنَّ لَكُمْ فِيهِ لَمَا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ (٣٨)

38. That ye shall have through it whatever ye choose?

C5619. It is clearly against both logic and justice that men of righteousness should have the same End as men of sin. Even in this life, man cannot command whatever he chooses though he is allowed a limited freedom of choice. How can he expect such a thing under a reign of perfect Justice and Truth?

أَمْ لَكُمْ أَيْمَانٌ عَلَيْنَا بَالِغَةٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ لَكُمْ لَمَا تَحْكُمُونَ (٣٩)

39. Or **have ye Covenants with Us on oath**, reaching to the Day of Judgment (providing) that ye shall have whatever ye shall demand?

C5620. Nor can the Pagans plead that they have any special Covenants with Allah which give them a favoured position above other mortals.

The 'Chosen Race' idea of the Jews is also condemned. It is quite true that a certain race or group, on account of special aptitude may be chosen by Allah to uphold His truth and preach it. But this is conditional on their following Allah's Law. As soon as they become arrogant and selfish, they lose that position. They cannot have a perpetual and unconditional lease till the Day of Judgment.

سَلْهُم أَيُّهُم بِذَٰلِكَ زَعِيمٌ (٤٠)

40. Ask thou of them, which of them will stand surety of that!

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاء ...

41. Or have they some "Partners" (in Godhead)?

C5621. "Partners" in Godhead. as in the doctrine of the Trinity, or indeed in any form of polytheism. Such a doctrine destroys the cardinal doctrine of the Unity of Allah.

... فَلْيَأْتُوا بِشُرَكَائِهِمْ إِن كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ (٤١)

Then let them produce their "partners," if they are truthful!

يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَن سَاقٍ ...

42. The Day that the shin shall be laid bare,

C5622. -**The Day that the Shin shall be laid bair"**, that is, when men are confronted with the stark reality of the Day of Judgment. On that occasion men will be summoned to adoration, not necessarily in words, but by the logic of facts, when the Reality will be fully manifest:

the Glory will be too dazzling for the Unbelievers, whose past deliberate refusal, when they had freedom to choose and yet rejected, will stand in way.

... وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ (٤٢)

and they shall be summoned to bow in adoration, but they shall not be able --

خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ...

43. **Their eyes will be** cast down -- ignominy will cover them;

C5623. Their past memories, combined with their present position, will then fill them with a sense of the deepest dismay and humiliation.

See last note.

... وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ (٤٣)

seeing that they had been summoned aforetime to bow in adoration, **while they were whole,** (and had refused).

C5624. Salimun: whole, in full possession of the power of judgment and win; not constrained, as they now will be, by the Punishment staring them full in the face.

فَذَرْنِي وَمَن يُكَذِّبُ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ ...

44. **Then leave Me** alone with such as reject this message:

C5625. Notice, the transition between "Me" and "We" in this verse, and again to "I" and "My" in the next verse. The first person plural ordinarily used in the holy Quran as Allah's Word, is the plural of respect.

In Royal decrees the first person plural is always used. When the first person singular is used, it marks some special personal relation, either of Mercy or favours (as in 2:38 or 2:150) or of punishment, as here. (Cf. n. 56. to 2:38).

... سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُم مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤٤)

by degrees shall We punish them from directions they perceive not.

C5626. Cf. 7:182. and n. 1154-A.

We must not be impatient if we see the wicked flourish. It may be that the very appearance of flourishing here may be a part of the Punishment. There may be an eventual punishment by a sort of Cataclysm; but evolutionary punishment is gradual and sure.

Allah may punish wicked people by granting them respite and providing them worldly benefits in abundance, which

encourages them in sin and transgression. So when they are finally seized by the Wrath of Allah they are caught suddenly and utterly unprepared, as it were, red handed while engrossed in disbelief, a life of impiety and open revolt against their Lord!

وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ (٤٥)

45. A (long) respite will I grant them:
truly powerful is My plan.

أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ أَجْرًا ...

46. Or is it that thou dost ask them for a reward,

C5627. Cf. 52:40, n.5074.

It costs the Unbelievers nothing to hear the Prophet, for the Prophet asks for no reward, and indeed suffers for their benefit.

Al-Mustafa is addressed in the first instance, but there is always a universal interpretation. The righteous man asks for no reward for his preaching or example: if he did, the value would be too great for the world to pay for. The Unbelievers behave as if they had the secret of the Unseen, but they are empty triflers, for, if they only tried to formulate spiritual laws, they would fail.

... فَهُم مِّن مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُونَ (٤٦)

so that they are burdened with a load of debt? --

أَمْ عِندَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُونَ (٤٧)

47. Or that they Unseen is in their hands, so that they can write it down?

C5628. Cf. 52:41, n. 5075.

The Unseen is certainly not within their knowledge or control. If it were, they could clearly write it down for their own guidance or the guidance of others. They should listen to the words of inspiration, sent by the Knower of all things.

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُن كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَى وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ (٤٨)

48. So wait with patience for the command of thy Lord,

and be not like the Companion of the Fish -- when he cried out in agony.

لَوْلَا أَن تَدَارَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ (٤٩)

49. Had not Grace from His Lord reached him, he would indeed have been **cast off on the naked** shore, in disgrace.

C5630. Cf. 37:145-146, and n. 4126.

فَاجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ ...

50. **Thus did his Lord** choose him ...

C5631. Jonah was chosen by Allah's Grace and Mercy to be Allah's Prophet to Nineveh. If in his human frailty he lost a little patience, he suffered his punishment, but his true and sincere repentance and recognition of Allah's goodness and mercy restored him from his physical. and mental distress, and from the obscuration of the spiritual Light in him.

... فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٥٠)

... and make him of the company **of the Righteous**.

C5632. Cf. 4:69, n. 586.

In the beautiful Company of the Righteous there is room for all, of every grade of spiritual advancement, from the highest to the most ordinary. But as in democratic politics every citizen's rights and status have complete recognition, so, in this Company, the badge of Righteousness is the bond, even though there may be higher degrees of knowledge or experience.

وَإِن يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ ...

51. And the Unbelievers **would almost trip thee up** with their eyes

C5633. The eyes of evil men look at a good man as if they would "eat him up", or trip him up, or disturb him from his position of stability or firmness. They use all

sorts of terms of abuse-"madman" or "one possessed by an evil spirit", and so on. Cf. 68:2 above, and n. 5594.

But the good man is unmoved, and takes his even course. The Message of Allah is true and will endure; and it is a Message to all Creation.

... لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ لَمَجْنُونٌ (٥١)

when they hear the message; and they say:

"Surely he is possessed!"

وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٥٢)

52. But **it is nothing less than a Message** to all the world

C5634. This is the extreme antithesis to madness or demoniacal possession. So far from the holy Prophet uttering words disjointed or likely to harm people, he was bringing the Message of true Reality, which was to be the cure of all evil, in every kind of world. For the different kinds of worlds see n. 20 to 1:2.

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

But verily this is a Message for the Allah-fearing.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Haqqah

الْحَاقَّةُ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah belongs to the early middle period of Makkan Revelation. The eschatological argument is pressed home; 'the absolute Truth cannot fail; it must prevail; therefore be not lured by false appearances in this life; it is Revelation that points to the sure and certain Reality.

C.249 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

in the fleeting world few things are what
They seem. What then is sire Reality?

Nations and men in the past assumed
Arrogance and perished because they were unjust,
But that destruction was but a foretaste
Of the Doom to come in the Hereafter, when all
Creation will be on a new plan, and true values
Will be fully established; to the Righteous
Will be Bliss, and to Evil, Punishment.
The Word of Revelation is not a Poet's
Imagination or a Soothsayer's groping
Into the future. It is Allah's own Message,
Of Mercy to the Righteous, and warning
To those who reject the Truth. Praise
And Glory to the name of Allah Most High!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَاقَّةُ (١)

1. The Sure Reality!

C5635. Al-haqqa:

- the sure Truth:
- the Event that must inevitably come to pass;
- the state in which all falsehood and pretence will vanish, and the absolute Truth will be laid bare.

The questions in the three verses raise an air of wonder.

The solution is suggested in what happened to the Thamud and the 'Ad, and other people of antiquity, who disregarded the Truth of Allah and came to violent end, even in this life,

Symbolically suggesting the great Cataclysm of the Hereafter, the Day of Doom.

مَا الْحَاقَّةُ (٢)

2. What is the Sure Reality?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ (٣)

3. And what will make thee realize what the Sure Reality is?

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ وَعَادٌ ...

4. The Thamud and the 'Ad people ...

C5636. For these two peoples of antiquity, see n. 1043 to 7:73, and n. 1040 to 7:65.

... بِالْقَارِعَةِ (٤)

... (branded) as false the Stunning Calamity!

C5637. Another description of the terrible Day of Judgment.

This word **Qaria** also occurs as the title of Surah 101.

فَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ (٥)

5. But the Thamud -- they were destroyed **by a terrible storm** of thunder and lightning!

C5638. The Thamud were addicted to class arrogance. They oppressed the poor. The prophet Salih preached to them, and put forward a wonderful she-camel as symbol of the rights of the poor, but they ham-strung her. See n. 1044 to 7:73.

They were destroyed in a mighty calamity, an earthquake accompanying a terrible thunderstorm.

وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ (٦)

6. And **the 'Ad** -- they were destroyed by a furious wind, exceedingly violent;

C5639. The 'Ad were an unjust people spoilt by their prosperity. The prophet Hud preached to them in vain. They were apparently destroyed by a terrible blast of wind.

See n. 1040 to 7:65.

See also 41:15-16, n. 4483, and 54:19, n. 5144.

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَانِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا

صَرْعَى ...

7. He made it rage against them seven nights and eight days in succession:

So that thou couldst see the (whole) people lying prostrate in its (path),

... كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ (٧)

as if they had been **roots of hollow palm trees** tumbled down!

C5640. A graphic simile. Dead men all lying about like hollow trunks of palm-trees, with their roots exposed! The 'Ad were reputed to be of a tall stature.

فَهَلْ تَرَى لَهُم مِّن بَاقِيَةٍ (٨)

8. Then seest thou any of them left surviving?

C5641. The calamity was thorough. The 'Ad were destroyed, and then the Thamud, and only the tradition of them was left behind.

See the references in n. 5636.

وَجَاء فِرْعَوْنُ ...

9. And Pharaoh, ...

C5642. Pharaoh's Messenger was Moses. See the story in 7:103-137 and the notes there.

Pharaoh was inordinately proud, and his fall was proportionately great: it gradually extended to his dynasty and his people.

See Appendix V.

... وَمَن قَبْلَهُ ...

... and those before him, ...

C5643. If we follow the sequence of peoples whose sins destroyed them, as mentioned in 7:59-158, we begin

with Noah, then have the 'Ad and the Thamud, then the Cities of the Plain, then Midian, then the people whose prophet was Moses (who occupies a central place in the canvas), and then the Pagan Quraish, to whom came the last and greatest of the prophets, our holy Prophet Muhammad.

This is the chronological sequence. Here there is no details, nor even complete mention. But Noah is alluded to last, and the 'Ad and the Thamud mentioned first, because the latter two belong to Arab tradition, and this is specially addressed to the Pagans of Makkah. Pharaoh is mentioned rather than Moses for the same reason, and any others are "those before Pharaoh".

... وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتُ ...

... and the Cities Overthrown, ...

C5644. The Cities Overthrown: Sodom and Gomorrah, Cities of the Plain, to whom Lot preached:

See 9:70, n. 1330; and 7:80-84, n. 1049.

... بِالْخَاطِئَةِ (٩)

... committed habitual Sin.

فَعَصَوْا رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً (١٠)

10. And disobeyed (each) the messenger of their Lord;
so He punished them with an abundant Penalty.

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَى الْمَاءُ ...

11. We, when the water (of Noah's flood) overflowed beyond its limits, ...

C5645. It was a widespread Flood. Cf. 7:59-64: also 11:25-48.

Noah was ridiculed for his preparations for the Flood: see 11:38, n. 1531.

But Allah had commanded him to build an Ark, in order that mankind should be saved from perishing in the

Flood. But only those of Faith got into the Ark and were saved. As the Ark was built to Allah's command, Allah "carried you (mankind) in the floating (Ark)". (R).

... حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ (١١)

... carried you (mankind), in the floating (Ark).

... لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً

12. That We might make it a message unto you,

C5646. It was a memorial for all time, to show that evil meets 'With its punishment, but the good are saved by the mercy of Allah.

... وَتَعِيَهَا أُذُنٌ وَاعِيَةٌ (١٢)

and that ears (that should hear the tale and) retain its memory should bear its (lessons) in remembrance.

C5647. Cf. the biblical Phrase, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15).

But the phrase used here has a more complicated import. An ear may hear, but for want of will in the hearer the hearer may not wish, for the future or for all time, to retain the memory of the lessons he had heard, even though for the time being he was impressed by it. The penetration of the truth has to be far deeper and subtler, and this is desired here.

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ نَفْخَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ (١٣)

13. Then, when one Blast is sounded on the Trumpet,

C5648. We now come to the Inevitable Event, the Day of Judgment, the theme of this Surah. This is the first Blast referred to in 39:68, n. 4343.

... وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ

14. And the earth is moved, and its mountains,

C5649. The whole of our visible world, as we now know it, will pass away, and a new world will come into being. The mountains are specially mentioned, because they stand as the type of hardness, size, and durability. They will be "crushed", i.e., lose their form and being at one stroke.

... فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً (١٤)

and they are crushed to powder at one stroke --

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ (١٥)

15. On that Day shall the (Great) Event come to pass,

وَانشَقَّتِ السَّمَاء فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ (١٦)

16. And the sky will be rent asunder, for it will that Day be flimsy,

... وَالْمَلَكُ عَلَى أَرْجَائِهَا

17. And the angels will be on its sides,

C5650. The whole picture is painted in graphic poetical images, to indicate that which cannot be adequately described in words, and which indeed our human faculties with their present limited powers are not ready to comprehend.

The angels will be on all sides, arrayed in ranks upon ranks, and the Throne of the Lord on high will be borne by eight angels (or eight rows of angels). That will be the Day when Justice will be fully established and man be mustered to his Lord for reckoning. (R).

... وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ (١٧)

and eight will, that Day, **bear the Throne** of thy Lord above them.

C5651. The number eight has perhaps no special significance, unless it be with reference to the shape of the Throne or the number of the angels.

The Oriental Throne is often octagonal, and its bearers would be one at each corner. (R).

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَى مِنكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ (١٨)

18. That Day shall ye be brought to Judgment: not an act of yours that ye hide will be hidden.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ...

19. Then He that will be given his Record in his right hand ...

C5652. Cf. 17:71, where the righteous are described as those who are given their record in their right hand at Judgment.

In 56:27, 56:38, and other passages, the righteous are called "Companions of the Right Hand".

فَيَقُولُ هَاؤُمُ اقْرَؤُوا كِتَابِيهْ (١٩) ...

.. will say: "Ah here! read ye my Record!

إِنِّي ظَنَنتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ حِسَابِيهْ (٢٠)

20. "I did **really understand** that my Account would (one Day) reach me!"

C5653. The righteous one rejoices that the faith he had during this world's life was fully justified, and is now actually realized before him. He quite understood and believed that good and evil must meet with their due consequences in the Hereafter, however much appearances may have been against it in the life in the lower world, "in the days that are gone".

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ (٢١)

21. And he will be in a life of Bliss,

فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ (٢٢)

22. In a Garden on high,

قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ (٢٣)

23. The **Fruits whereof** (will hang in bunches) low and near.

C5654. The description is that of ripe, luscious grapes, hanging low in heavy bunches, so near that they could be gathered and enjoyed in dignified ease.

Cf. also 55:54; 76:14.

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ ...

24. "Eat ye and drink ye, with full satisfaction; because of the (good) that ye sent before you ...

C5655. Cf. 2:110: "Whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees well all that ye do."

... فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ (٢٤)

... in the days that are gone!"

C5656. It will be a wholly new world, a new earth and a new heaven, when the blessed might well think with calm relief of "the days that are gone".

Cf. 14:48, and n. 1925.

Even Time and Space will be no more, so that any ideas that we may form here will be found to have become wholly obsolete by then.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ ...

25. And he that will be given his Record in his left hand,

C5657. This is in contrast to the righteous ones who will receive their record in their right hand.

Cf. 69:19, n. 5652.

The righteous are glad when they remember their past: their memory is itself a precious possession. The unjust are in agony when they remember their past. Their memory is itself a grievous punishment.

... فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيَهْ (٢٥)

will say: "Ah! would that my record had not been given to me!

وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ (٢٦)

26. "And that I had never realized how my account (stood)!

يَا لَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ (٢٧)

27. "Ah! would **that** (Death) had made an end of me!

C5658. The **death** as from this life was but a transition into a new world. They would wish that that death had been the end of all things, but it will not be.

مَا أَغْنَى عَنِّي مَالِيهْ (٢٨)

28. "Of no profit to me has been my wealth!

هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيهْ (٢٩)

29. "My power has perished from me!"...

C5659. The intensest agony is when the soul loses power over itself, when the personality tries to realise itself in new conditions and cannot: this is life in death.

خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ (٣٠)

30. (The stern command will say): "Seize ye him, and bind ye him,

C5660. Perhaps the word for **'bind'** should be construed: '**bind** his hands round his neck, to remind him that his hands when they were free were closed to all acts of charity and mercy':

Cf. 17:29.

ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ (٣١)

31. "And burn ye him in the Blazing Fire.

ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ (٣٢)

32. "Further, make him march in a chain, **whereof** the length is seventy cubits!

C5661. The sinful men who will be given their record on the Day of Judgment in their left hands will be in utter despair. Their power and authority which they misused to perpetrate injustice and oppression will be gone. The wealth that had made them turn a deaf ear to the call of Truth will be no more. They will cry out in agony:

"O would that we were never raised again!. 0 would that death had obliterated us once for an".

But their cries will be of no avail. They will be seized, bound in chains and drawn into the Blazing Fire for their crimes against Allah and man. [Eds.]

إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ (٣٣)

33. "This was he that **would not believe** in Allah Most High,

C5662. The grip of sin was fastened on sinners because they forsook Allah. They ran after their own lusts and worshipped them, or they ran after Allah's creatures, ignoring Him Who is the cause and source of all good.

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ (٣٤)

34. "And would not encourage the feeding of the indigent!

C5663. Cf. 107:3; 89:18.

The practical result of their rebellion against the God of Mercy was that their sympathies dried up. Not only did they not help or feed those in need, but they hindered others from doing so. And they have neither friend nor sympathy (food) in the Hereafter.

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَاهُنَا حَمِيمٌ (٣٥)

35. "So no friend hath he here this Day.

وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِينٍ (٣٦)

36. "Nor hath he any food except the corruption from the washing of wounds,

C5664. They wounded many people by their cruelty and injustice in this life, and it is befitting that they should have no food other than -the foul pus from the washing of wounds.' (R).

لَا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلَّا الْخَاطِؤُونَ (٣٧)

37. "Which none do eat but those in sin."

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٣٨)

38. So I do **call to witness** what ye see

C5665. This is an adjuration in the same form as that which occurs in 56:75, 70:40, 90:1, and elsewhere.

Allah's Word is the quintessence of Truth. But what if someone doubts whether a particular Message is Allah's Word communicated through His Messenger, or merely an imaginary tale presented by a poet, or a soothsayer's vain prophecy? Then we have to examine it in the light of our highest spiritual facilities. The witness to that Word is what we know in the visible world, in which falsehood in the long run gives place to truth, and what we know in the invisible world, through our highest spiritual faculties. We are asked to examine and test it in both these ways.

وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٣٩)

39. And what ye see not,

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ (٤٠)

40. That this is verily the word of an honored messenger;

C5666. Honoured messenger. one that is worthy of honour on account of the purity of his life, and may be relied upon not to invent things but to give the true inner experiences of his soul in Revelation.

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ ...

41. It is not the word of a poet:

C5667. A **poet** draws upon his imagination, and the subjective factor is so strong that though we may learn much from him, we cannot believe as facts the wonderful tales he has to tell. And the poet who is not a Seer is merely a vulgar votary of exaggerations and falsehoods.

... قَلِيلًا مَا تُؤْمِنُونَ (٤١)

little it is ye believe!

وَلَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ ...

42. Nor is it the word of a soothsayer:

C5668. A **soothsayer** merely pretends to foretell future events of no profound spiritual consequence. Most of his prophecies are frauds, and none of them is meant to teach lessons of real admonition. Such admonition is the work of an honoured prophet.

... قَلِيلًا مَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٢)

little admonition it is ye receive.

تَنزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٣)

43. (This is) a Message sent down from the Lord of the Worlds.

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ (٤٤)

44. And if the messenger were to invent any sayings in Our name,

لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ (٤٥)

45. We should certainly seize him by his right hand,

C5669. The right hand is the hand of power and action. Any one who is seized by his right hand is prevented from acting as he wishes or carrying out his purpose.

The argument is that if an impostor were to arise, he would soon be found out. He could not carry out his fraud indefinitely. But the prophets of Allah, however much they are persecuted, gain more and more power every day, as did the holy Prophet, whose truth, earnestness, sincerity, and love for all, were recognised as his life unfolded itself. (R).

ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ (٤٦)

46. And We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart:

C5670. This would effectually stop the functioning of his life.

فَمَا مِنكُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ (٤٧)

47. Nor could any of you withhold him (from Our wrath).

C5671. The protection which the prophets of Allah enjoy in circumstances of danger and difficulty would not be available for impostors. (R).

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٨)

48. But verily this is a Message for the Allah-fearing.

وَإِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مِنكُم مُّكَذِّبِينَ (٤٩)

49. And We certainly know that there are amongst you those that reject (it)

وَإِنَّهُ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٠)

50. But truly (Revelation) is **a cause of sorrow** for the Unbelievers.

C5672. The Message of Allah is glad tidings for those who believe in Him and follow His Law, for it is a message of Mercy and Forgiveness through repentance and amendment. But in the case of the wicked it is a cause of sorrow, for it denounces sin and proclaims the punishment of those who do not turn from evil:

وَإِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِينِ (٥١)

51. But verily **it is Truth** of assured certainty.

C5673. All **Truth** is in itself. But as received by men, and understood with reference to men's psychology, certainty may have certain degrees.

- There is the probability or certainty resulting from the application of man's power of judgment and his appraisement of evidence. This is ***ilmulyaqin***, certainty by reasoning or inference.
- Then there is the certainty of seeing something with our own eyes. "Seeing is believing." This is ***'ain-ul-yaqin***, certainty by personal inspection.

  See 102:5,7.
- Then, as here, there is the absolute Truth, with no possibility of error of judgment or error of the eye, (which stands for any instrument of sense-

perception and any ancillary aids, such as microscopes etc.). This absolute Truth is the ***haqq-il-yaqin*** spoken of here.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ (٥٢)

52. So **glorify the name** of thy Lord Most High.

C5674. As Allah has given us this absolute Truth through His Revelation, it behaves us to understand it and be grateful to Him. We must celebrate His praises in thought, word and deed.



The Absolute Reality

سَأَلَ سَائِلٌ بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَافِعٌ

A questioner asked about a Penalty to befall -- The Unbelievers the which there is none to ward off --

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ma'arij

الْمَعَارِج

Introduction and Summary

This is another eschatological Surah closely connected in subject matter with the last one. Patience and the mystery of Time will show the ways that climb the Heaven. Sin and Goodness must each eventually come to its own.

Chronologically it belongs to the late early middle Makkan period, possibly soon after Surah 49.

C.250 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Man can ascend to the Presence of Allah,
But by gradual Ways and in process of Time.
But what is the Time? A day is as fifty
Thousand years, on two different planes.
What seems near is far, and what seems far is near.
So will be Judgement, when things as we know them
Will be transformed completely in a world
All new. Evil will come to its own,
Whatever its masks in this transitory world,
And good will surely reach its goal.
The good life is patient, in prayer
And well-doing. Faith and the earnest search
For the Good Pleasure of All, purity and probity.
These are the paths to the Heights and Gardens
Of Bliss. No evil can enter there:
For the evil are other ways, leading
By steep descent to dark Ignominy!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سَأَلَ سَائِلٌ ...

1. A questioner asked....

C5675. Any one might ask. When will Judgment come?

That question usually implies doubt. The answer is: the knowledge of Time is beyond man's comprehension. But there is something which touches him closely and concerns his conduct and his future welfare; and that is explained in four propositions.

- Judgment is sure to come, and none can ward it off;
- it will exact a dreadful Penalty from Unbelievers, but the righteous have nothing to fear;
- it will be a Penalty from Allah, the Lord of both Justice and Mercy; it will not be merely a blind calamity of fate; and
- further we are reminded of another title of Allah, "Lord of the Ways of Ascent"; which means that though He sits high on His Throne of Glory, He is not inaccessible, but in His infinite Mercy has provided ways of ascent to Him;

see next note.

بِعَذَابٍ وَاقِعٍ (١) ...

.. about a Penalty to befall --

لِّلْكَافِرِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَافِعٌ (٢)

2. The Unbelievers the which there is none to ward off --

مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذِي الْمَعَارِجِ (٣)

3. (A Penalty) from Allah, Lord of the Ways of Ascent.

C5676. Maarij. stair-ways, ways of ascent.

In 43:33, the word is used in its literal sense: "silver stair-ways on which to go up".

Here there is a profound spiritual meaning. Can we reach up to Allah Most High? In His infinite grace He gives that privilege to angels. But the way is not easy, nor can it be travelled in a day.

See the next two notes.

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ ...

4. The angels and the Spirit ...

C5677. Ruh: "The Spirit".

Cf. 78:38, "the Spirit and the angels"; and 97:4, "the angels and the Spirit".

In 16:2, we have translated **Ruh** by **"inspiration"**. Some Commentators understand the angel Gabriel by "the Spirit". But I think a more general meaning is possible, and fits the context better. (R).

... إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ ...

... ascend unto Him in a Day ...

C5678. Cf. 32:4-5, and notes 3632 and 3634.

... كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (٤)

... the measure whereof is (as) fifty thousand years:

فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيلًا (٥)

5. Therefore do thou hold Patience -- a Patience of beautiful (contentment).

C5679. The prophet of Allah, persecuted and in trouble with the world, should yet hold Patience-not the sort of patience which goes with complaints expressed or suppressed, but the sort of patience that is content with the ordering of Allah's world, for he believes and knows it to he good, as did the holy Prophet Muhammad. Such a patience is akin to Good pleasure, for it arises from the purest faith and trust in Allah. (R).

إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا (٦)

6. They see the (Day) indeed as a far-off (event):

وَنَرَاهُ قَرِيبًا (٧)

7. But We see it (quite) near.

C5680. The men of evil may see the just retribution for their sins so far off that they doubt whether it would ever come. But in Allah's sight, and on the scale of the Universal Plan, it is quite near; for time as we know it hardly exists in the next world. It may come even in this life: but it is bound to come eventually.

يَوْمَ تَكُونُ السَّمَاء كَالْمُهْلِ (٨)

8. The Day that the sky will be like molten brass,

C5681. Cf. 18:29, where the wrong-doer will have a drink like melted brass in Hell;

and 44:45, where his food will be like molten brass.

Here the appearance of the sky is compared to molten brass, or, as some understand it, like the dregs of oil. What is conveyed by the metaphor is that the beautiful blue sky will melt away.

وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ (٩)

9. And the mountains will be like wool,

C5682. Cf. 101:5, where the metaphor of carded wool is used.

The mountains which seem so solid will be like flakes of wool driven by the carder's hand.

وَلَا يَسْأَلُ حَمِيمٌ حَمِيمًا (١٠)

10. And no friend will ask after a friend,

C5683. The world as we know it win have so completely passed away that the landmarks in the heavens and on earth will also have vanished.

Not only that, but the human relationships of mind and heart will have been transformed by sin into something ugly and dreadful. The sinners will be so overcome with terror at the realisation of their personal responsibility that they will desert their most intimate friends, and indeed their very sight of each other will add to their agony.

يُبَصَّرُونَهُمْ ...

11. Though they will be put in sight of each other --

... يَوَدُّ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِي مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِئِذٍ بِبَنِيهِ (١١)

the sinner's desire will be:

would that he could redeem himself from the **Penalty of that Day** by (sacrificing) his children,

C5684. The sinner will offer his children, his family, his kinsmen, who had sheltered and protected him,-in fact everything on earth that he could-as a ransom for himself. Such would be his selfishness and his agony.

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَأَخِيهِ (١٢)

12. His wife and his brother,

وَفَصِيلَتِهِ الَّتِي تُؤْوِيهِ (١٣)

13. His kindred who sheltered him.

وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يُنجِيهِ (١٤)

14. And all,

all that is on earth -- so it could deliver him:

C5685. What would not the sinner give for his own deliverance! But nothing could save him. The Fire of Hell would be roaring for him!

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا لَظَىٰ (١٥)

15. By no means!

For it would be the Fire of Hell! --

نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوَىٰ (١٦)

16. Plucking out (his being) right to the skull! --

C5686. It would be a Fire not only burning his body, but reaching right up to his brains and his understanding and -as is said in 104:7- his heart and affections also.

In other words the Fire will burn into his inmost being.

تَدْعُو مَنْ أَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ (١٧)

17. Inviting (all) such as turn their backs and turn away their faces (from the Right),

C5687. The analysis of sin is given in four master-strokes, of which the first two refer to the will or psychology of the sinner, and the last two to the use he makes of the good things of this life.

1. Sin begins with turning your back to the Right, refusing to face it squarely, running away from it whether from cowardice or indifference.
2. But Conscience and the sense of Right will try to prevent the flight; the Grace of Allah will meet the sinner at all comers and try to reclaim him; the hardened sinner will deliberately turn away his face from it, insult it, and reject it.
3. The result of this psychology will be that he will abandon himself to greed, to the correction of riches, and the acquisition of material advantages to which he is not entitled; this may involve hypocrisy, fraud, and crime.
4. Having acquired the material advantages, the next step will be to keep others out of them, to prevent hoarded wealth from fructifying by circulation, to conceal it from envy or spite. This is the spiritual Rake's Progress.

وَجَمَعَ فَأَوْعَى (١٨)

18. And collect (wealth) and hide it (from use)!

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا (١٩)

19. Truly man was created very impatient --

C5688. Man, according to the Plan of Allah, was to be in the best of moulds (95:4). But in order to fulfil his high destiny he was given free-will to a limited extent. The wrong use of this free-will makes his nature weak (4:28), or hasty (17:11), or impatient, as here.

That becomes his nature by his own act, but he is spoken of as so created because of the capacities given to him in his creation.

إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا (٢٠)

20. Fretful when evil touches him;

وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا (٢١)

21. And niggardly when good reaches him --

C5689. In adversity he complains and gets into despair. In prosperity he becomes arrogant and forgets other people's rights and his own shortcomings.

Cf. 41:49-50.

إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ (٢٢)

22. Not so those devoted to Prayer --

C5690. The description of those **devoted to Prayer** is given in a number of clauses that follow, introduced by the words "Those who ....."

"Devoted to Prayer" is here but another aspect of what is described elsewhere as the Faithful and the Righteous.

Devotion to prayer does not mean merely a certain number of formal rites or prostrations. It means a complete surrender of one's being to Allah. This means;

- an earnest approach to and realisation of Allah's Presence ("steadfastness in Prayer");
- acts of practical and real charity;
- and attempt to read this life in terms of the Hereafter;
- the seeking of the Peace of Allah and avoidance of His displeasure;
- chastity;
- probity true and firm witness; and
- guarding the prayer. (verse 34).

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ (٢٣)

23. Those who remain steadfast to their prayer;

وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ (٢٤)

24. And those in whose wealth is a recognized right

لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ (٢٥)

25. For the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking);

C5691. See n. 5001 to 51:19.

True charity consists in finding out those in real need, whether they ask or not. Most frequently those who ask are idle men who insolently wish to live upon others. But all cases of those who ask should be duly investigated, in case a little timely help may set the erring on the way. But the man with wealth or talent or opportunity has the further responsibility of searching out those in need of his assistance, in order to show that he holds all gifts in trust for the service of his fellow- creatures.

وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٢٦)

26. And those who hold to the truth of the Day of Judgment;

وَالَّذِينَ هُم مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِم مُّشْفِقُونَ (٢٧)

27. And those **who fear** the displeasure of their Lord --

C5692. A true fear of Allah is the fear of offending against His holy Will and Law, and is therefore akin to the love of Allah. It proceeds from the realisation that all true peace and tranquility comes from attuning our will to the universal Will and that sin causes discord, disharmony, and displeasure,-another name for the Wrath of Allah.

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ (٢٨)

28. For their Lord's displeasure is the opposite of Peace and Tranquility --

C5693. Some would construe this verse:

"And their Lord's displeasure is one against which there is no security";

meaning that the punishment of sin may come suddenly at any time, when you least expect it.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ (٢٩)

29. And those who guard their chastity,

إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ (٣٠)

30. Except with their wives and the (captives) whom their right hands possess -- for (then) they are not to be blamed,

C5694. Captives of war may be married as such: see 4:25:

but their status is interior to that of free wives they are free. This institution of the captives of war is now obsolete.

Such inferiority of status as there was, was in the status of captivity, not in the status of marriage as such, in which there are no degrees except by local customs, which Islam does not recognize.

فَمَنِ ابْتَغَى وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ (٣١)

31. But those who trespass beyond this are transgressors --

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ (٣٢)

32. And those who respect their trusts and covenants;

C5695. For obligations of trusts and covenants, express or implied, see n. 682 to 5:1.

They are just as sacred in ordinary everyday life as they are in special spiritual relationships. In addition, our life itself, and such reason and talents as we possess, as well as our wealth and possessions are trusts, of which we must fulfil the duties punctiliously.

وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ (٣٣)

33. And those who stand firm in their testimonies;

C5696. If we know any truth of any kind, to that we must bear witness, as affecting the lives or interests of our fellow-beings,-firmly, not half-heartedly, without fear or favour, even if it causes loss or trouble to us, or if it loses us friends or associates.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (٣٤)

34. And those who guard (the sacredness) of their worship --

C5697. Worship or prayer includes honest work, and every good deed. To guard the sacredness of this ideal is to sum up the whole duty of man.

We began with "steadfastness in prayer" in verse 23 above, and after a review of various aspects of the good man's fife, close with the guarding of worship, ie, living as in the sight of Allah.

أُولَٰئِكَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ مُّكْرَمُونَ (٣٥)

35. Such will be the honored ones in the Gardens of (Bliss).

Section 2

فَمَالِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قِبَلَكَ مُهْطِعِينَ (٣٦)

36. Now what is the matter with the Unbelievers that they rush madly **before thee** --

C5698. Before thee. The Unbelievers did not believe in a Hereafter. When the Bliss of the Hereafter was described, as in the last verse, they ridiculed it and pretended to be running in for it as in a race. They are here rebuked in the same tone of sarcasm.

عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ عِزِينَ (٣٧)

37. From the right and from the left, in crowds?

أَيَطْمَعُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيمٍ (٣٨)

38. Does every man of them long to enter the Garden of Bliss?

كَلَّا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُم مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩)

39. By no means!

For We have created them out of the (base matter) they know!

C5699. The animal part of man is nothing to be proud of, and they know it. It is by spiritual effort, and long preparation through a good life that a man can rise above the mere animal part of him to his high dignity as a spiritual being, and his noble destiny in the Hereafter.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ ...

40. Now I do call to witness...

C5700. For the form of adjuration, cf. 69:38, n. 5665; also 56:75.

Here the witness placed before us by Allah is His own power and glory manifested in the splendour of sunrise and sunset at different points through the solar year,

... بِرَبِّ الْمَشَارِقِ وَالْمَغَارِبِ ...

... the Lord of all points in the East and the West ...

C5701. See n. 4034 to 37:5.

If Allah has such power in the wonderful phenomena of the rising of the sun at varying points, repeated year after year, can you not see that He can easily substitute better men than you Unbelievers and blasphemers?

... إِنَّا لَقَادِرُونَ (٤٠)

... that We can certainly --

C5702. The transition from the singular "I" to the plural "We" may be noted. See n. 56 to 2:38.

عَلَىٰ أَن نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ ...

41. Substitute for them better (men) than they;

... وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ (٤١)

and We are not to be defeated (in Our Plan).

فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوضُوا وَيَلْعَبُوا ...

42. So leave them to plunge in vain talk and play about, ...

... حَتَّى يُلَاقُوا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ (٤٢)

... until they encounter that Day of theirs which they have been promised! --

C5703. Their talk, their skepticism, is vain, because all spiritual evidence is against it; it is like the foolish play of people who do not think seriously. But the tremendous Day of Judgment and Reality will come, as described in the next two verses.

يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَى نُصُبٍ يُوفِضُونَ (٤٣)

43. The Day whereon they will issue from their sepulchers in sudden hast as if they were rushing to a goal-post (fixed for them) --

C5704. Now there will be a definite Goal-post or Banner or Standard of Truth fixed, which all must acknowledge. But they will acknowledge it in shame and dejection. For the time for their repentance and amendment will then have passed.

خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ...

44. Their eyes lowered in dejection -- ignominy covering them (all over)!

... ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ (٤٤)

Such is the Day the which they are promised!

وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا

And made the moon a light in their midst, and made the sun as a (Glorious) Lamp?

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Nuh

نُوح

Introduction and Summary

This is an early Makkan Surah, of which the date has no significance. The theme is that while Good must uphold the standard of Truth and Righteousness, a stage is reached when it must definitely part company with Evil, lest Evil should spread its corruption. The story of Noah's agony is almost a Parable for the Holy Prophet's persecution in the Makkan period.

C.251 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The Prophet's Message, as was that of Noah,
Is a warning against sin, and the Good News of Mercy
Through the door of Repentance: for Allah is loving
And long-suffering, and His Signs are within us
And around us. But the sinners are obstinate:
They plot against Righteousness, and place their trust
In futile falsehood. They will be swept away,
And the earth will be purged of Evil. Let us
Pray for Mercy and Grace for ourselves,
For those nearest and dearest to us,
And for all who turn in faith to Allah,
In all ages and all countries,
And and amongst all People.



إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ ...

1. We sent Noah to his People (with the Command):

C5705. Noah's mission is referred to in many places. See specially 11:25-49 and notes. His contemporaries had completely abandoned the moral law. A purge had to be made, and the great Flood made it. This gives a new starting point in history for Noah's People,- i.e., for the remnant saved in the Ark.

... أَنْ أَنذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١)

"Do thou warn thy people before there comes to them a grievous Penalty."

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢)

2. He said:

"O my People! I am to you a Warner, clear and open:

C5706. His Warning was to be both clear (i.e., unambiguous) and open (i.e., publicly proclaimed). Both these meanings are implied in Mubin.

Cf. 67:26.

The meaning of the Warning was obviously that if they had repented, they would have obtained mercy.

أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَطِيعُونِ (٣)

3. "That ye should

- worship Allah,
- fear Him,
- and obey me:

C5707. Three aspects of man's duty are emphasized:

- true worship with heart and soul;
- God-fearing recognition that all evil must lead to self-deterioration and Judgment;
- hence repentance and amendment of life, and obedience to good men's counsels.

يَغْفِرْ لَكُم مِّن ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

4. "So He may forgive you your sins and give you respite for a stated Term:

... إِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ إِذَا جَاءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ ...

For when the Term given by Allah is accomplished, it cannot be put forward:

C5708. Allah gives respite freely; but it is for Him to give it. His command is definite and final; neither man nor any other authority can alter or in any way modify it. If we could only realise this to the full in our inmost soul, it would be best for us and lead to our happiness.

... لَوْ كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤)

if ye only knew."

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِي لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا (٥)

5. He said:

"O my Lord! I have called to my People night and day:

فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَائِي إِلَّا فِرَارًا (٦)

6. "But my call only increases (their) flight (from the Right)."

C5709. When convincing arguments and warnings are placed before sinners, there are two kinds of reactions.

- Those who are wise receive admonition, repent, and bring forth fruits of repentance, i.e., amend their lives and turn to Allah.
- On the other hand, those who are callous to any advice take it up as a reproach, fly farther and farther from righteousness, and shut out more and more the channels through which Allah's healing Grace can reach them and work for them.

وَإِنِّي كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوا أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ ...

7. "And every time I have called to them, that thou mightest forgive them, they have (only) thrust their fingers into their ears,

... وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصَرُّوا ...

covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate,

C5710. The literal meaning would be that, just as they thrust their fingers into their ears to prevent the voice of the admonisher reaching them, so they covered their bodies with their garments that the light of truth should not penetrate to them and that they should not even be seen by the Preacher.

But there is a further symbolic meaning.

"Their garments" are the adoration of vanities, their evil habits, customs, and traditions, and their ephemeral interested and standards. They drew them closer round them to prevent the higher Light reaching them. They grew obstinate and gave themselves up to the grossest form of selfish arrogance.

... وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا اسْتِكْبَارًا (٧)

and given themselves up to arrogance.

ثُمَّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُهُمْ جِهَارًا (٨)

8. "So I have called to them aloud;

ثُمَّ إِنِّي أَعْلَنتُ لَهُمْ ...

9. "Further I have spoken to them in public ...

C5711. Noah used all the resources of the earnest preacher: he dinned the Message of Allah into their ears; he spoke in public places; and he took individuals into his confidence, and appealed privately to them; but all in vain.

... وَأَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ إِسْرَارًا (٩)

... and secretly in private,

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا (١٠)

10. "Saying,

'Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is Oft-Forgiving;

يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاء عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا (١١)

11. "'He will send **rain** to you in abundance;

C5712. They had perhaps been suffering from drought or famine. If they had taken the message in the right way, the rain would have been a blessing to them. They took it in the wrong way, and the rain was a curse to them, for it flooded the country and drowned the wicked generation. In the larger Plan, it was a blessing all the same; for it purged the world, and gave it a new start, morally and spiritually.

وَيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ أَنْهَارًا (١٢)

12. "'Give you increase in wealth and sons;

and bestow on you Gardens and bestow on you Rivers (of flowing water).

C5713. Each of these blessings-rain and crops, wealth and man-power, flourishing gardens, and perennial streams-are indications of prosperity, and have not only a material but also a spiritual meaning.

Note the last point, **"rivers of flowing water"**.

The perennial springs make the prosperity as it were permanent: they indicate a settled population, honest and contented, and enjoying their blessings here on earth as the foretaste of the eternal joys of heaven.

مَّا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا (١٣)

13. "'What is the matter with you, that ye place not your hope for kindness and long-suffering in Allah --

C5713a. An alternate translation would be "... that ye fear Allah's Message"

i.e., why don't you fear Allah's Majesty, His greatness and consequent punishment for your sinfulness, and hope for His mercy, kindness and reward for your faith and good deeds. The words of the verse contain the twin strands -fear and hope- simultaneously.

وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا (١٤)

14. "'Seeing that it is He that has created you in diverse stages?

C5714. Cf. 22:5, and notes 2773-2777;

also 23:12-17, and notes 2872-2875.

The meaning here may be even wider. Man in his various states exhibits various wonderful qualities or capacities, mental and spiritual that may be

compared with the wonderful workings of nature on the earth and in the heavens. Will he not then be grateful for these Mercies and turn to Allah, Who created all these marvels?

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا (١٥)

15. "'See ye not how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another,

C5715. See n. 5559 to 67:3.

وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا (١٦)

16. "'And made the moon a light in their midst,

and made the sun as a (Glorious) Lamp?

C5716. Cf. 25:61, where the sun is referred to as the glorious Lamp of the heavens:

"Blessed is He Who made the Constellations in the skies, and placed therein a lamp, and a moon giving light."

وَاللَّهُ أَنبَتَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ نَبَاتًا (١٧)

17. "'And Allah has produced you from the earth, growing (gradually),

C5717. Cf. 3:37, where the growth of the child Mary the Mother of Jesus is described by the same word **nabat**, ordinarily denoting the growth of plants and trees.

The simile is that of a seed sown, that germinates, grows, and dies, and goes back to the earth.

In man, there is the further process of the Resurrection.

Cf. also 20:55.

ثُمَّ يُعِيدُكُمْ فِيهَا وَيُخْرِجُكُمْ إِخْرَاجًا (١٨)

18. "'And in the End He will return you into the (earth),

and raise you forth (again at the Resurrection)?

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ بِسَاطًا (١٩)

19. "'And Allah has made the earth for you as a carpet (spread out),

C5718. Cf. 20:53.

لِتَسْلُكُوا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا فِجَاجًا (٢٠)

20. "'That ye may go about therein, in spacious roads.' "

C5719. Fijaj implies valley-roads or passes between mountains.

Though there are mountain chains on the earth, Allah's artistry has provided even in such regions, valleys and channels by which men may go about. Mountain roads usually follow the valleys.

Section 2

قَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ إِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْنِي ...

21. Noah said:

"O my Lord! they have disobeyed me,

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَنْ لَمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالُهُ وَوَلَدُهُ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (٢١)

but they follow (men) whose wealth and children give them no Increase but only Loss.

C5719a. Sinners always resent it as a reproach that righteous men should speak to them for their own good. They prefer smooth flatterers, and they worship power even though the depositaries of power are selfish men, who neither profit themselves nor profit others by the wealth and man-power that they collect round themselves. They forget that mere material things may be a delusion and a snare unless the moral and spiritual factor behind them sanctifies them.

وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا كُبَّارًا (٢٢)

22. "And they have devised a tremendous Plot.

C5720. Having got material resources the wicked devise plots to get rid of the righteous whose presence is a reproach to them. For a time their plots may seem tremendous and have the appearance of success, but they can never defeat Allah's Purpose.

وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ ...

23. "And they have said (to each other), abandon not your gods;

C5721. For an account of how these Pagan gods and superstitions connected with them originated, and how they became adopted into the Arabian Pagan Pantheon.

See Appendix X at the end of this Surah.

... وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا (٢٣)

abandon neither Wadd nor Suwa, neither Yaghuth nor Ya'uq, nor Nasr --

وَقَدْ أَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا ضَلَالًا (٢٤)

24. "They have already misled many;

and grant Thou no increase to the wrongdoers but in straying (from their mark)."

C5722. Such Pagan superstitions and cults do not add to human knowledge or human well-being. They only increase error and wrong-doing. For example, how much lewdness resulted from the Greek and Roman Saturnalia! And how much lewdness results from ribald Holi songs! This is the natural result, and Noah in his bitterness of spirit prays that Allah's grace may be cut off from men who hug them to their hearts. They mislead others: let them miss their own mark!

See also verse 28 below.

مِمَّا خَطِيئَاتِهِمْ أُغْرِقُوا ...

25. Because of their sins they were drowned (in the flood), ...

C5723. The Punishment of sin seizes the soul from every side and in every form. Water (drowning) indicates death by suffocation, through the nose, ears, eyes, mouth, throat, and lung.

Fire has the opposite effects: it bums the skin, the limbs, the flesh, the brains, the bones, and every part of the body.

So the destruction wrought by sin is complete from all points of view. And yet it is not death (20:74); for death would be a merciful release from the Penalty, and the soul steeped in sin has closed the gates of Allah's Mercy on itself. There they will abide, unless and "except as Allah willeth- (6:128).

For time and eternity, as we conceive them now, have no meaning in the wholly new world which the soul enters after death or Judgement.

... فَأُدْخِلُوا نَارًا...

... and were made to enter the Fire (of Punishment):

... فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنصَارًا (٢٥)

and they found -- in lieu of Allah -- none to help them.

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا (٢٦)

26. And Noah said:

"O my Lord! Leave not of the Unbelievers, a single one on earth!

C5724. The Flood was sent in order to purge all sin. The prayer of Noah is not vindictive. It simply means, "Cut off all the roots of sin".

See next note.

إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا (٢٧)

27. "For, if Thou dost leave (any of) them, they will but mislead thy devotees,

and they will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones.

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَن دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ...

28. "O my Lord!

Forgive me, my parents, all who enter my house in Faith, and (all) believing men and believing women:

C5725. Indeed he prays for himself, his parents, his guests, and all who in earnest faith turn to Allah, in all ages and in all places. Praying for their forgiveness is also praying for the destruction of sin.

وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا (٢٨) ...

and to the wrongdoers grant Thou no increase but in Perdition!"

C5726. This is slightly different in form from verse 24 above, where see n. 5722.

See also last note.



قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا

Say: "I do no more than invoke my Lord, and I join not with Him any (false god)."

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Jinn

الْجِنِّ

Introduction and Summary

This is a late Makkan Surah, of which we can be tolerably certain of the date. It was two years before Hijrah, when the Prophet, despised and rejected in his native city of Makkah, went to evangelize the lordly men of Taif. They maltreated him and nearly killed him; what caused him even greater pain was the maltreatment of the humble and lowly men who went with him. Tabari has handed down that memorable Prayer of faith and humility which he offered in the midst of his suffering. On his return journey to Makkah, a glorious vision was revealed to him---hidden spiritual forces working for him---people not

known to him accepting his mission while his own people were still rejecting him. Within two months some strangers from Madinah had privately met him and laid the foundation of Hijrah which was to change the fate of Arabia and the course of world history.

C.252 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Spiritual Truth finds its lodgment
In all sorts of unexpected places, and in all sorts
Of unexpected ways. The man of God
When most depressed by the buffets of a world
Steeped in selfishness, sees a glorious vision
Hidden spiritual forces work for him,
Make known the truth in marvelous ways,
And proclaim the Goodness and Judgement of Allah.
The reject all Error and lead others to purify
Their wills and come to Allah. Behold!
Every place and time, every gift
It meet for the service of Allah, the One,
The True, Whose Word the righteous one
Proclaims and must proclaim at all cost.
Man's Duty is plain, but in the Kingdom
Of Allah, through Allah's chosen ones,
We rise to higher and higher Mysteries,
As may be expedient for us. Yet when
Or how our End may be, is not given
To man to know: let him but take
The Treasures well-guarded, that come to him,
And praise the Lord of all Knowledge and Wisdom!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ ...

1. Say:

It has been revealed to me that a company of Jinns listened (to the Quran).

C5727. Cf. 46:29-32, n. 4809.

The Jinns had evidently heard of previous revelations, that of Moses (46:30), and the error of Trinitarian Christianity (72:3).

The community from which they come have all sorts of good and bad persons but they are determined to preach the good Message of Unity which they have heard and believed in.

C5728. For **Jinns**, see n. 929 to 6:100.

فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا (١) ...

They say,

'We have really heard a wonderful Recital!

C5729. The Holy Quran would be to them a wonderful Recital-both in subject-matter and in the circumstance that it had come in Arabia among a pagan and ignorant nation.

يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَن نُّشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا (٢)

2. It gives guidance to the Right, and we have believed therein:

We shall not join (in worship) any (gods) with our Lord.

وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَىٰ جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا (٣)

3. 'And exalted is the Majesty of our Lord: He has taken neither a wife nor a son.

C5730. They abjure paganism and also the doctrine of a son begotten by Allah, which would also imply a wife of whom he was begotten. Cf. 6:101.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ سَفِيهُنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ شَطَطًا (٤)

4. 'There were some foolish ones among us, who used to utter extravagant lies against Allah;

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن تَقُولَ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا (٥)

5. 'But we do think that no man or spirit should say aught that is untrue against Allah.

C5731. No one ought to entertain false notions about Allah. For by joining false gods in our ideas of worship, we degrade our conception of ourselves and the duty we owe to our Creator and Cherisher, to Whom we have to give a final account of life and conduct.

If we worship idols or heavenly bodies, or human beings, or any creatures, or false fancies born of self or foolish abstractions, or the lusts and desires of our own hearts, we are not only doing violence to Truth, but we are causing discord in the harmony of the world.

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا (٦)

6. 'True, there were persons among mankind who took shelter with persons among the Jinns, but they increased them in folly.

C5732. If human beings think that by a resort to some spirits they can shelter themselves from the struggles and actualities of their own lives, they are sadly mistaken. They must "dree their own weird", as the Scots would say.

It is folly to try to escape from the duties which they can understand in their own natural surroundings, or to try to avoid the consequences of their own acts. Only such persons do so as do not realise that they will ultimately have to answer at the Judgment-Seat of Allah, whose first outpost is in their own conscience.

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا (٧)

7. 'And they (came to) think as ye thought, that Allah would not raise up anyone (to Judgment).

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهُبًا (٨)

8. 'And we pried into the secrets of heaven;
but we found it filled with stern guards and flaming fires.

C5733. See notes 1951, 1953, and 1954 to 15:17-18.

See also n. 5562 to 67:5.

The speakers here have repented of sin and evil; but they recognize that there are evil ones among them, who have stealth and prying, but their dark plots will be defeated by vigilant guardians of the Right, whose repulse of the attacks of evil is figured by the shafts of meteoric light in the heavens.

وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ ...

9. 'We used, indeed, to sit there in (hidden) stations, to (steal) a hearing;

... فَمَن يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا (٩)

but any who listens **now** will find a flaming fire watching him in ambush.

C5734. What is the force of **"now"**?

It refers to the early Makkan period of Revelation. It means that whatever excuse there may have been before, for people to try to seek out the hidden truths of the Unseen World through Jinns, there was none now, as the perspicuous Quran had restored the Message of Unity and cleared religion of all the cobwebs, mysteries, and falsehoods with which priestcraft and pious fraud had overlaid it.

The result is that such seekers after false hidden knowledge will find themselves confronted now by the flaming fire, which, like the shafts of meteoric light (see last note), will lie in wait for and nip such priestcraft and black magic in the bud.

وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِي أَشَرٌّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

10. 'And we understand not whether ill is intended to those on earth,

C5735. To these Jinns this gospel is yet new, and appears like a flaming sword which destroys falsehood while it protects Truth. They frankly confess that they do not clearly understand whether on the whole it will be a mercy to mankind or a punishment for mankind forsaking the paths of Allah. But they rightly feel that it must be a blessing if all seek right Guidance.

... أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا (١٠)

or whether their Lord (really) intends to guide them to right conduct.

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنَّا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ كُنَّا طَرَائِقَ قِدَدًا (١١)

11. 'There are among us some that are righteous, and some the contrary: we follow divergent paths.

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نُّعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَن نُّعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا (١٢)

12. 'But we think that we can by no means frustrate Allah throughout the earth, nor can we frustrate Him by flight.

C5736. See last note.

In any case, they know that Allah's Truth and Allah's Plan must prevail, and no one can frustrate Allah's purpose; or escape from it. Why not then bring their will into conformity with it, and find Peace, as they have found, by the acceptance of Faith?

وَأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدَىٰ آمَنَّا بِهِ ...

13. 'And as for us, since we have listened to the Guidance, we have accepted it:

... فَمَن يُؤْمِن بِرَبِّهِ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَلَا رَهَقًا (١٣)

and any who believes in his Lord has no fear, either of a short (account) or of any injustice.

C5737. Possibly, from this world's standards, it may be that a believer suffers for his Faith. He may be laughed at, persecuted, and actually hurt, "in mind, body, or

estate". But he is not perturbed. He takes it all cheerfully, because he knows that when his full account is made up-real gain against apparent loss,-he is a gainer rather than a loser. And his Faith tells him that Allah is a just God, and will never allow him to suffer any injustice, or permit the account of his merit to appear one whit shorter than it is,

وَأَنَّا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ ...

14. 'Amongst us are some that submit their wills (to Allah), and some that swerve from justice.

... فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُوْلَئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا (١٤)

Now those who submit their wills -- they have sought out (the path) of right conduct:

C5738. Any one who responds to true Guidance, and submits his will to Allah, finds that he makes rapid progress in the path of right conduct and right life. He gets more and more assurance that his destination is the Garden of Bliss.

وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا (١٥)

15. 'But those who swerve, they are (but) fuel for Hell Fire -- '

C5739. An unjust life carries its own condemnation. It does no good to itself or to any one else. It bears no fruit. It becomes merely fuel for the Fire of Punishment.

وَأَلَّوِ اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَاهُم مَّاء غَدَقًا (١٦)

16. (And Allah's Message is):

"If they (the pagans) had (only) remained on the (right) Way, We should certainly have **bestowed on them Rain** in abundance.

C5740. Rain: literally, water: stands for all kinds of blessings, material, moral, and spiritual. All blessings come by way of trial: the more we have, the more is expected of us. A man of gifts, talents, or insight is expected to show a higher standard of love and unselfishness than one less gifted, just as a rich man is expected to give more in charity than a poor man.

لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ...

17. "That We might try them by that (means),

... وَمَن يُعْرِضْ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا (١٧)

but if any turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will cause him to undergo a severe Penalty.

C5741. To remember Allah is to realise His presence, acknowledge His Goodness, and accept His guidance. If we fail to do so, by deliberately turning away, He will withdraw His Grace, and that will be a severe Penalty indeed.

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ ...

18. "And the places of worship are for Allah (alone):

C5742. This is a Makkan Surah, and Masjid must be understood, not in the later technical sense of a Mosque, but in the root meaning, of any place, or occasion of worship or humble prostration in the service of Allah, or any limbs or faculties or accessories used in such worship, e.g., hands and feet, lips and voice, understanding or organisation.

A number of meanings therefore follow.

- No place of worship whatever should be used for the worship of any other but Allah the true God. The Kaba was then full of idols, but the idols and their votaries were usurpers.
- Worship should not be mixed up with vain objects, but should be reserved for the sincere service of Allah.
- All our gifts are for Allah's service, which includes the service of His creatures, and not for our vainglory. (R).

... فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا (١٨)

so invoke not anyone along with Allah;

وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا (١٩)

19. "Yet when the **Devotee** of Allah stands forth to invoke Him, **they** just make round him a dense crowd."

C5743. The **Devotee of Allah:** the holy Prophet Muhammad.

C5744. They. The immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraish who were then in possession of the Ka'bah and who put all sorts of obstacles and indignities in the way of the holy Prophet for preaching the One True God and denouncing idol-worship. They used to surround him and mob him and to treat him as if he was guilty of some dreadful crime. But the wider application refers to the habit of the world to make a marked man of any who diverges from the beaten paths of their favourite sins and who pleads earnestly for the cause of Truth and righteousness. They ridicule him; they surround him with jeers and obloquy; and they try to make the physical condition of his life as difficult for him as possible.

Section 2

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٠)

20. Say:

"I do no more than invoke my Lord, and I join not with Him any (false god)."

قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا ...

21. Say:

"It is not in my power to cause you harm,

C5745. 'Do not suppose that I am going to harm you individually or socially; the very opposite is my wish; but I cannot force you to right conduct; that must depend upon the purification of your own faith and will'.

... وَلَا رَشَدًا (٢١)

or to bring you to right conduct."

قُلْ إِنِّي لَن يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ ...

22. Say:

"No one can deliver me from Allah (if I were to disobey Him),

C5746. 'My mission is from Allah. I cannot choose but obey. He has charged me to deliver the Message, and if I were to disobey him, I would myself be worthy of His punishment, and no one can save me. From every kind of trouble and difficulty my only refuge is in Him. I must proclaim His Message: otherwise I am false to the mission He has entrusted to me.'

... وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِن دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا (٢٢)

nor should I find refuge except in Him.

إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ ...

23. "Unless I proclaim what I receive from Allah and His Messages:

... وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا (٢٣)

for any that disobey Allah and His Messenger -- for them is Hell: they shall dwell therein forever."

حَتَّى إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ ...

24. At length, when they see (with their own eyes) that which they are promised --

C5747. When the Hereafter arrives, and true values are restored, they will see clearly that the Promise of Allah was true, and that death on this earth was not the end of all things. Then they will see that those who were accounted weak on this earth will, in the realm of Reality, be the strong ones; those who seemed to have no following here will have, there, all the great and true ones with them, to help them and welcome them to their own ranks.

... فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَأَقَلُّ عَدَدًا (٢٤)

then will they know who it is that is weakest in (his) helper and least important in point of numbers.

قُلْ إِنْ أَدْرِي أَقَرِيبٌ مَّا تُوعَدُونَ ...

25. Say:

"I know not whether the (punishment) which ye are promised is near,

C5748. The coming of Judgment is certain. But the exact time, relatively to our standards on this earth, no one can tell. Allah alone knows it. Even a Prophet of Allah, as such, does not know the Mysteries of the Unseen World, except in so far as they have been revealed to him by Allah's Revelation.

Cf. 6:50, and notes 867-68.

... أَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهُ رَبِّي أَمَدًا (٢٥)

or whether my Lord will appoint for it a distant term.

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا (٢٦)

26. "He (alone) knows the Unseen,

nor does He make any one acquainted with His Mysteries --

C5749. The Unseen has two aspects. The relative Unseen is so with reference to a particular person, because of the intervention of Time, Space, or particular circumstances. For example, I cannot see to-day a house which I saw last year, because it has since been pulled down. Or I cannot in Lahore see the "Gateway of India" in Bombay, although any one in Bombay can see it. Or I cannot see the satellites of Jupiter with the naked eye, though I can through a telescope. But the Absolute Unseen, the Absolute Mystery, is something which no creature can know or see, except in so far as Allah reveals it to him. And Allah reveals such things to the extent that is good for men, through His chosen messengers, among whom the greatest is Muhammad. The exact time of the Hour of Judgment has not been so shown, because we must not wait for it, but five as if it is to be at this minute.

See last note and next note, and the references there.

إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِن رَّسُولٍ ...

27. "Except a messenger whom He has chosen:

C5750. Cf. 3:179, and n. 482. See also last note.

... فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا (٢٧)

and then He makes a band of watchers march before him and behind him,

C5751. Revelation is not a mechanical or material thing. It has to be safeguarded from being distorted or corrupted by ignorance, selfishness, or the powers of evil. How can its precious and subtle worth and the spiritual safeguards against its misuse by human folly or the perversity of evil be expressed in plain human words?

We can imagine a very great treasure, which has to be transmitted. To guard it against evilly-disposed persons, a strong escort is required, to march in front and behind, so as to protect it from all sides. When it reaches its destination, the escort presents its credentials and an Invoice showing the Treasure being transmitted. Then the destined receiver knows that it has come intact and feels satisfied. So about spiritual Revelation. The Prophet recognises the credentials and checks the contents on the tablets of his own heart and insight. He has then no doubt that it is a true Message from Allah, and that those who bring it are the true messengers "of their Lord". (R).

لِيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ ...

28. "That he may know that they have (truly) brought and delivered the Messages of their Lord:

C5751 a. They: the band of watchers.

In **"he may know"** it is better to construe **"he"** to refer to the prophet who receives the Message from the **"watchers"**.

... وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ ...

and He surrounds (all the mysteries) that are with them,

C5752. Ahata: surrounds, encompasses, encloses, guards on all sides, keeps under his own possession and control, and does not allow to be corrupted or debased. See last note but one.

... وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا (٢٨)

and takes account of every single thing."

C5753. In the spiritual Kingdom,-as indeed, in all things,-Allah's knowledge, wisdom, and Plan comprehend all things, great and small. There is nothing which we do, nothing which happens that is outside His account.

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْءًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا

Verily, the rising by night (for Tahajjud prayer) is very hard and most potent and good for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (understanding) the Word (of Allâh).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Muzzammil

المُزَّمِّلُ

Introduction and Summary

This is one of the earliest Surahs to have been revealed. This first was Surah 96:1-5 (Iqra), in the fortieth year of the Prophet's life, say about 12 years before the Hijrah. Then there was an interruption (*Fatrah*), of which the duration cannot be exactly ascertained, as there was no external history connected with it. The usual estimate puts it at about six months, but it may have been a year or two years. The years were then counted by the luni-solar calendar: see Appendix IX. The second Surah in chronological order was probably a great portion of

Surah 68. (Al Qalam), which came after the *Fatrah* was over. About the same time came this Surah (say third) and Surah 74, which follows (say fourth), and the remainder of Surah 96. We may roughly put the date of this Surah at about 11 to 10 years before the Hijrah.

The subject matter is the significance of Prayer and Humility in spiritual life and the terrible fate of those who reject Faith and Revelation.

C.253 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Devote yourself to the service of Allah
In the stillness of the night, but not
All night. In the world's persecution rely
On Allah, Who will deal with His enemies fittingly.
Let not Allah's service be a matter
Of difficulty to you: do all your duties
In whole-hearted remembrance of Allah.
And ever seek His bountiful Grace.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ (١)

1. O thou folded in garments!

C5754. Muzzammil: Some Commentators understand by this, "properly dressed for prayer", or "folded in a sheet, as one renouncing the vanities of this world.

Muzzammil is one of the titles of our holy Prophet.

But there is a deeper meaning in this and the address "Thou wrapped up" of the next Sura. Human nature requires warm garments and wrappings to protect the body from cold or heat or rain. But in the spiritual world these wrappings are useless: the soul must stand bare and open before Allah, in the silence of the night, but not too austerely, as the following verses show.

قُمِ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٢)

2. Stand (to pray) by night, but not all night --

C5755. The Prophet was prone to austerities in the cave of **Hiraa**, both before and after he received his mission, spending days and nights in prayer and contemplation. Midnight and after-midnight prayers have technically received the name of **Tahajjud**.

See also verse 20 below; also 17:79.

نِصْفَهُ أوِ انقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا (٣)

3. Half of it -- or a little less,

أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ ...

4. Or a little more;

... وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ ...

... and recite the Qur'án in slow, ...

C5756. At this time there was only Surah 96., Surah 68, and possibly Surah 74, and the opening Sura (Al-Hamd).

For us, now, with the whole of the Quran before us, the injunction is specially necessary. The words of the Quran must not be read hastily, merely to get through so much reading. They must be studied, and their deep meaning pondered over. They are themselves so beautiful that they must be lovingly pronounced in rhythmic tones.

... تَرْتِيلًا (٤)

... measured rhythmic tones.

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا (٥)

5. Soon shall We send down to thee a weighty Message.

C5757. The Quran as completed by degrees, after the Fatrah (see Introduction to this Sura).

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْئًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا (٦)

6. Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the Word (of Prayer and Praise).

C5758. For contemplation, prayer, and praise, what time can be so suitable as the night, when calm and silence prevail, the voices of the market-place are still, and the silent stars pour forth their eloquence to the discerning soul.

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي ٱلنَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا (٧)

7. True, there is for thee by day prolonged occupation with ordinary duties:

C5759. A prophet of Allah, as a man, a member of a family, or a citizen, has many ordinary duties to perform; and his work may be made difficult and irksome in protecting those who listen to his preaching and are therefore molested and persecuted by the world. But while discharging all his ordinary duties, he should work as in the presence of Allah, and in all matters and at all times retain the sense of Allah's nearness. His work may be on earth, but his heart is in Heaven.

وَٱذْكُرِ ٱسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا (٨)

8. But keep in remembrance the name of the Lord and devote thyself to Him wholeheartedly.

رَبُّ ٱلْمَشْرِقِ وَٱلْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَٱتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا (٩)

9. (He is) Lord of the East and the West:

there is no god but He:

take Him therefore for (thy) Disposer of Affairs.

C5760. Allah is Lord of all places. He rules the world. Therefore be not discouraged by the plots or enmity of wicked men. Leave all things to Allah; trust Him; He is just and will do justice. Only turn away from the unjust, but in a worthy and noble way; i.e., to show them clearly that you do not fear them, but that you leave all affairs in Allah's hands.

If we divide the world into hemispheres from north to south, "East and West" will cover all directions.

وَٱصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَٱهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا (١٠)

10. And have patience with what they say,

and leave them with noble (dignity).

وَذَرْنِي وَالْمُكَذِّبِينَ أُولِي النَّعْمَةِ ...

11. And leave Me (alone to deal with) those in possession of the good things of life, who (yet) deny the Truth;

C5761. Men who enjoy the good things of life have special cause for gratitude to Allah, Who bestowed them. When they are in the ranks of Allah's enemies, none but Allah can adequately deal with them.

... وَمَهِّلْهُمْ قَلِيلًا (١١)

and bear with them for a little while.

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَا أَنكَالًا ...

12. With Us are Fetters (to bind them),

C5762. Cf. 13:5; 34:33; 40:71 and 69:30-32.

... وَجَحِيمًا (١٢)

and a Fire (to burn them),

C5763. Cf. 44:47 and 56:94.

وَطَعَامًا ذَا غُصَّةٍ ...

13. And Food that chokes,

C5764. Cf. 44:43; 56:52; 69:36-37, and 88:6.

... وَعَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٣)

and a Penalty Grievous.

C5765. In general terms, the Penalty of sin may be described as a Penalty Grievous, an Agony. It may come in this very fife, but that in the Hereafter is certain! See next verse.

We can also consider punishments from another aspect.

- The first object of punishment is to protect the innocent from the depredations of the criminal: we have to bind him.

- The next object is to produce in his heart the fire of repentance, to consume his evil proclivities and to light his conscience. Where that is not enough, a more drastic punishment for the callous is something which causes him pain in things which ordinarily cause him pleasure, such as food, drink, and the satisfaction of physical needs.
- People in whom the higher spiritual faculties are dead may perchance be awakened through the lower physical features of their life, which appeal to them. Where this also fails, there is finally the complete agony, a type too terrible to contemplate.

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ ...

14. One Day the earth and the mountains will be in violent commotion,

... وَكَانَتِ الْجِبَالُ كَثِيبًا مَّهِيلًا (١٤)

and the mountains will be as a heap of sand poured out and flowing down.

C5766. The Judgment is described as a **violent commotion** which will change the whole face of nature as we know it. Even the hard rock of mountains will be like loose sand running without any cohesion.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولًا شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ ...

15. We have sent to you, (O men!) a messenger, to be a witness concerning you,

C5767. Our holy Prophet has to warn his age, i.e., the present age, reclaim it from sin, and be a witness for the righteous and against evil, as Moses did his office in his age.

... كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولًا (١٥)

even as We sent an messenger to Pharaoh.

For Pharaoh, his arrogance, and his punishment, see 10:75-92.

فَعَصَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ الرَّسُولَ ...

16. But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger;

C5768. Pharaoh the earthly king faces Moses the prophet of Allah. In earthly eyes it was Moses who disobeyed Pharaoh. In spiritual relations, it was Pharaoh who disobeyed Moses.

Pharaoh represented an ancient and mighty kingdom, with a long history behind it, and a pride in its learning and science, art, organisation, and power.

Moses led a depressed people, hewers of wood and drawers of water. But the might of Allah was behind him.

What became of the wisdom, power, and armies of Pharaoh? They were rent asunder when the day came, and the terror and surprise must have been the same as if the heavens had been rent asunder, and children's hair had turned grey! But formidable revolutions turn children grey-haired in another way. Nations that were as children became wise before they in their turn decayed, and from similar disobedience to the laws of Allah. For Allah's law must stand and be fulfilled when all else is swept away.

... فَأَخَذْنَاهُ أَخْذًا وَبِيلًا (١٦)

so We seized him with a heavy Punishment.

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُونَ إِن كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيبًا (١٧)

17. Then how shall ye, if ye deny (Allah), guard yourselves against a Day that will make children hoary-headed? --

C5769. If already you deny and disobey Allah in this life of probation, how can you stand up to the Day of Judgment, the Day of the terrible Reality?

That Day is described in two metaphors:

- It will be a time of such stress that even children will become like hoary-headed men;

- What we look upon as the eternal sky, ever the same, will be cleft asunder; cf. 82:1.

In other words, the shape of things will be completely altered, both within man and in outer nature, and all true values will be restored. For the Promise of Allah, in this as in all other respects, cannot but be fulfilled.

السَّمَاء مُنفَطِرٌ بِهِ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَفْعُولًا (١٨)

18. Whereon the sky will be cleft asunder?
His Promise needs must be accomplished.

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ ...

19. Verily this is an Admonition:

C5770. This is no empty threat. It is an admonition for your good. If you have the will, you can at once come for the Grace and Mercy of Allah, and obtain it. For Repentance and Amendment are the straight Way to the nearness of Allah.

فَمَن شَاء اتَّخَذَ إِلَى رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا (١٩) ...

Therefore, whoso will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord!

Section 2

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَى مِن ثُلُثَيِ اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ ...

20. The Lord doth know that thou standest forth (to prayer) nigh two-thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third of the night,

C5771. Cf., above, 73:2-4.

The Prophet, and a zealous band of his disciples, were often up, two-thirds of the night, or a half, or a third, rejecting sleep and giving themselves up to Prayer and Praise and the reading of the Quran. They are told that this was too severe a tax on them, especially if their health was affected, or they were on a journey, or they were striving, with might and main, in other ways, for the cause of Allah.

See the lines following.

...وَطَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ ...

and so doth a party of those with thee.

...وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ عَلِمَ أَن لَّن تُحْصُوهُ ...

But Allah doth appoint Night and Day in due measure. He knoweth that **ye are unable to keep count thereof.**

C5772. The usual meaning taken is that the counting of the exact hours of night and day may not be possible for ordinary people, in order to determine exactly the half, or the third, or the two-thirds of a night.

The length of the night and the day varies every day of the solar year, and the precise hour of midnight can only be determined by exact observation in clear skies or by chronometers, which is not possible for everyone.

But I understand it in a wider meaning. Allah fixes night and day in due proportions; for rest and work, and according to seasonal variations. For prayer and praise no meticulous observations of that kind are necessary or possible. Allah's service can be done in many ways as detailed below. But we must give some time to devotion, as may be most easy and convenient to us, in various circumstances of health, travel, and the performance of various duties.

..... فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْرَؤُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ...

So He hath turned to you (in mercy): read ye therefore, of the Quran as much as may be easy for you.

C5773. The reading of the Quran here is a part of Prayer and religious devotion. This is not to be made into an obsession or a burden.

Cf. 20:2: -We have not sent down the Quran to thee to be an occasion for thy distress.-

We must do it whole-mindedly, but not by formal mechanical computations.

...عَلِمَ أَن سَيَكُونُ مِنكُم مَّرْضَىٰ وَآخَرُونَ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

He knoweth that there may be (some) among you in ill-health; others travelling through the land,

...يَبْتَغُونَ مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَآخَرُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...

seeking of Allah's bounty; yet others **fighting** in Allah's Cause.

C5774. This refers to **Jihad**.

The better opinion is that this particular verse was revealed in Madinah, long after the greater part of the Surah.

The reference, further on, to canonical Prayers and regular Charity (Zakat), points to the same conclusion.

...فَاقْرَؤُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ ...

Read ye, therefore, as much of the Qur'án as may be easy (for you);

...وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا...

and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan.

C5775. Cf. 2:245, and n. 276, where the meaning of "a Beautiful Loan" is explained.

See also 57:18.

The "Beautiful Loan" should be that of our own souls. We should expect no returns in kind, for that is not possible. But the reward we shall find with Allah will be infinitely greater and nobler.

Cf. the biblical phrase, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. vi. 20).

...وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُم مِّنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِندَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا...

And whatever good ye send forth for your souls, Ye shall find it in Allah's presence -- yea, better and greater, in Reward.

C5776. Any good that we do raises our own spiritual status and dignity. We must not think that when we speak of Allah's service or Allah's Cause, we are doing anything for His benefit: He is independent of all needs whatsoever.

... وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٠)

And seek ye the Grace of Allah: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

C5777. This emphasizes the need of Allah's Grace. Whatever good we do, our own merits are comparatively small. Allah's Grace must lift us up and blot out our shortcomings. Even in piety there may be an arrogance which may become a sin. We should always seek Allah's Mercy in all humility.



كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ إِلَّا أَصْحَابَ الْيَمِينِ

Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds; Except the Companions of the Right Hand.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Muddaththir

المُدَّثِّر

Introduction and Summary

This Surah from about the same time as the last one. Its subject matter is also similar: Prayer and Praise, and the need of patience in a period of great spiritual screw: the unjust who cause sorrow and suffering now will themselves experience agony in the Hereafter.

C.254 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The Seer, by devotion and contemplation,
Prepares himself for the duties of Guide

And Leader to mankind: but when there comes
The clear Call, he must stand forth
And proclaim the Message---in purity,
Unselfish devotion, and patience long-suffering---
To save men from the Distress of the Final Day.
For many there be who glory in a life
Of ease and plenty, arrogant splendour,
And the applause of men, who scorn Allah's Truth
And reject the divine. How will they fare
When the Judgement comes, and the Penalty?
Every Fact of Life's grand Pageant
Is but a Portent for the Future,
Every soul is in pledge and must
Redeem itself by Faith and Prayer.
By Charity and earnest care for the Realities
Of Life. Bring but the will, and Allah
Will guide---the Lord of Righteousness,
The Lord of Mercy and Forgiveness!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ (١)

1. O thou **wrapped up** (in a mantle)!

C5778. In these wonderful early verses there is a double thread of thought:

- A particular occasion or person is referred to;
- a general spiritual lesson is taught.

As to first, the Prophet was now past the stage of personal contemplation, lying down or sitting in his mantle; he was now to go forth boldly to deliver his Message and publicly proclaim the Lord: his heart had always been purified, but now all his outward doings

must be dedicated to Allah, and conventional respect for ancestral customs or worship must be thrown aside; his work as a Messenger was the most generous gift that could flow from his personality, but no reward or appreciation was to be expected form his people, but quite the contrary; there would be much call on his patience, but his contentment would arise from the good pleasure of Allah.

As to second, similar stages arise in a minor degree in the fife of every good man, for which the Prophet's life is to be a universal pattern. (R).

قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ (٢)

2. Arise and deliver thy warning!

وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ (٣)

3. And thy Lord do thou magnify!

وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ (٤)

4. And thy **garments** keep free from stain!

C5779. Possibly, in its immediate application, there is a reference to the dirt and filth which the Pagans used to throw at the Prophet to insult and persecute him.

وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ (٥)

5. And all abomination shun!

C5780. Rujz or **Rijz**. abomination:

usually understood to refer to idolatry. It is even possible that there was an idol called **Rujz**. But it has a wider signification, as including a mental state opposed to true worship, a state of doubt or indecision.

وَلَا تَمْنُن تَسْتَكْثِرُ (٦)

6. Nor expect, in giving, any increase (for thyself)!

C5781. The legal and commercial formula is that you give in order to receive. And usually you expect to receive what is worth to you a little more than you give. The spiritual consideration is that you give, but expect

nothing from the receiver. You serve Allah and Allah's creatures.

وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ (٧)

7. **But, for thy Lord's (Cause)**, be patient and constant!

C5782. Our zeal for Allah's Cause itself requires that we should not be impatient, and that we should show constancy in our efforts for His Cause. For we have faith, and we know that He is All-Good, All-Wise, and All-Powerful, and everything will ultimately be right.

فَإِذَا نُقِرَ فِي النَّاقُورِ (٨)

8. Finally when the Trumpet is sounded,

فَذَلِكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوْمٌ عَسِيرٌ (٩)

9. That will be -- that Day -- a Day of Distress --

C5783. The Sinner's course is now shown in contrast to the Seeker's. The Sinner may be self-complacent now: but what will be his position when the Reckoning comes? Not easy, indeed a Day of Distress!

عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ غَيْرُ يَسِيرٍ (١٠)

10. Far from easy for those without Faith.

ذَرْنِي ...

11. **Leave Me alone, (to deal)** ...

C5784. The question of Justice and Punishment to men is for Allah alone. For man at his best can see only one side of truth, and only Allah is All-Knowing. He alone can judge the limits of Justice and Mercy.

... وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيدًا (١١)

... with the (creature) **whom I created (bare and) alone!** --

C5785. Man's adventitious advantages-wealth, power, position, talents-are not due to his own merits. They are gifts from Allah, Who created him. In himself he came bare and alone.

وَجَعَلْتُ لَهُ مَالًا مَّمْدُودًا (١٢)

12. To whom I granted resources in abundance,

وَبَنِينَ شُهُودًا (١٣)

13. And sons to be by his side! --

C5786. The great ones of the earth may have wealth, a large following, sons by their side to defend them and do their bidding and man-power to help them in their battles. Life may be smooth and agreeable to them. But their responsibility is to Allah.

وَمَهَّدتُّ لَهُ تَمْهِيدًا (١٤)

14. To whom I made (life) smooth and comfortable!

ثُمَّ يَطْمَعُ أَنْ أَزِيدَ (١٥)

15. Yet is he greedy -- that I should add (yet more) --

C5787. The Sinner takes Allah's gifts as if they were his right. The more he gets, the more is he greedy. Yet to Allah's Signs and revelations he is willfully deaf or even openly rebellious. But he is only preparing the way for his own undoing.

كَلَّا إِنَّهُ كَانَ لِآيَاتِنَا عَنِيدًا (١٦)

16. By no means!
For to Our Signs he has been refractory!

سَأُرْهِقُهُ صَعُودًا (١٧)

17. Soon will I visit him with a mount of calamities!

C5788. "A mount of calamities" or disasters: may be understood as a phrase for cumulative disasters.

إِنَّهُ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ (١٨)

18. For he thought and he plotted --

فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ (١٩)

19. And **woe to him!** how he plotted! --

C5789. Cf. 51:10: "Woe to the falsehood-mongers!" (R).

ثُمَّ قُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ (٢٠)

20. Yea, woe to him! how he plotted! --

ثُمَّ نَظَرَ (٢١)

21. Then he looked round;

ثُمَّ عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ (٢٢)

22. Then he frowned and he scowled;

ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ (٢٣)

23. Then he turned back and was haughty;

فَقَالَ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُؤْثَرُ (٢٤)

24. Then said he:

"This is nothing but magic derived from of old;"

C5790. The Commentators understand the reference to be to Walid ibn Mugaira, who was a wealthy Sybarite, Pagan to the core, and an inveterate enemy to the holy Prophet. He and Abu Jahl did all they could, from the beginning of the preaching of Islam, to abuse and persecute the Preacher, to run down his doctrine, and to injure those who believed in it.

But the meaning for us is much wider. There are Walids in all ages. They cannot understand divine inspiration, and seek to explain its winterfed influence over the lives of men by some such unmeaning formula as "magic". The eternal Hope is to them mere human delusion!

إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ (٢٥)

25. "This is nothing but the word of a mortal!"

سَأُصْلِيهِ سَقَرَ (٢٦)

26. Soon will cast him into Hell-Fire!

C5791. The Sinner's perversity can only end in the Fire of Punishment. It enters his very being.

See next note.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سَقَرُ (٢٧)

27. And what will explain to thee what Hell-fire is?

لَا تُبْقِي وَلَا تَذَرُ (٢٨)

28. Naught doth it permit to endure, **and naught** doth it leave alone! --

C5792. He is in a state in which he neither lives nor dies (87:13). Looked at in another way, the things that in a good man are meant to last and grow, are for the sinner destroyed, and no part of his nature is left untouched. The brightness of his very manhood is darkened and extinguished by sin.

لَوَّاحَةٌ لِّلْبَشَرِ (٢٩)

29. Darkening and changing the color of man!

عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ (٣٠)

30. Over it are Nineteen.

C5793. The figure nineteen refers to angels appointed to guard Hell.

See verse 31 below and the corresponding note. [Eds.]

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَائِكَةً ...

31. And We have **set none** but angels as guardians of the Fire;

C5794. Cf. 66:6, and n. 5540.

There was a great volume of angelology in the religious literature of the People of the Book (i.e., the Jews and Christians) to whom (among others) an appeal is made in this verse. The Essenes, a Jewish brotherhood with highly spiritual ideas; to which perhaps the prophet Jesus himself belonged, had an extensive literature of angelology, In the Midrash also, which was a Jewish school of exegesis and mystical interpretation, there was much said about angels.

The Eastern Christian sects contemporary with the birth of Islam had borrowed and developed many of these ideas, and their mystics owed much to the Gnostics and the Persian apocalyptic systems.

In the New Testament the relation of the angels with Fire is referred to more than once. In Rev. 9:11 we have "the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon".

In Rev. 14:18 there is an "angel which had power over fire", and in Rev. 16:8 an angel has "power ... given unto him to scorch men with fire".

In the Old Testament (Daniel 7:9-10) the essence of all angels is fire: thousand thousands of them issued as a fiery strewn from before the Ancient of Days, whose "throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire".

... وَمَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ...

and We have **fixed their number** only as a trial for Unbelievers --

C5795. The mystic significance of numbers is a favourite theme with some writers, but I lay no. stress on it.

In Christian theology the number of the Beast, 666, in Rev. 13:18 has given rise to much controversy, and may refer only to the numerical value of the letters in the name of the Roman Emperor Nero.

In our own literature I think that we ought to avoid too much insistence on speculative conjectures. (R).

...لِيَسْتَيْقِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَيَزْدَادَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِيمَانًا...

in order that the People of the Book may arrive at certainty, and the Believers may increase in Faith --

...وَلَا يَرْتَابَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ...

and that no doubts may be left for the People of the Book and the Believers,

...وَلِيَقُولَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا

مَثَلًا...

and that those in whose hearts is a disease and the Unbelievers may say, "What symbol doth Allah intend by this?"

C5796. There are four classes of people mentioned here.

1. The Muslims will have their faith increased, because they believe that all revelation is from Allah Most Merciful, and all His forces will work in their favour.
2. The People of the Book, those who had received previous revelations of an analogous character, the Jews and Christians, had numerous sects disputing with each other on minute points of doctrine; but they will now, if they believe, find rest from controversies in a broad understanding of scripture.
3. Those in whose hearts is a disease (see 2:8-10, notes 33-34), the insincere ones, the hypocrites, will only be mystified, because they believe nothing and have rejected the grace and mercy of Allah.
4. The Unbelievers have frankly done the same and must suffer similar consequences. (R).

...كَذَٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ...

Thus doth Allah leave to stray whom He pleaseth, and guide whom He pleaseth;

...وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ...

and none can know the forces of the Lord, **except He,**

C5797. It is a necessary consequence of moral responsibility and freedom of choice in man, that he should be left free to stray if he chooses to do so, in spite of all the warning and the instruction he receives. Allah's channels of warning and instruction-His spiritual forces-are infinite, as are His powers. No man can know them. But this warning or reminder is addressed to all mankind.

All things are referred to Allah. But we must not attribute evil to Him. In 4:79 we are expressly told that the good comes from Allah, and the evil from ourselves.

وَمَا هِيَ إِلَّا ذِكْرَىٰ لِلْبَشَرِ (٣١)

and this is no other than a warning to mankind.

Section 2

كَلَّا وَالْقَمَرِ (٣٢)

32. Nay, verily: by the Moon,

C5798. An oath in human speech calls in evidence something sacred in the heart of man. In Allah's Message, also, when delivered in human language, solemn emphasis is indicated by an appeal to something striking among the Signs of Allah, which will go straight to the human heart which is addressed. In each case the symbol of the appeal has reference to the particular point enforced in the argument.

Here we are asked to contemplate three wonderful phenomena, and they lead up to the conclusion in verse 38.

1. The moon, next after the sun, is the most striking luminary to our sight. Its reflected light has for us even a greater mystery than the direct light of the sun, which looks to us like pure fire. The moon was worshipped as a deity in times of darkness. But in reality, though she rules the night, her rays are only reflections, and are wanting in warmth and vitality. So every soul which looks up to a mere creature of Allah for a sort of vicarious salvation is in spiritual darkness or error; for the true source of spiritual light and life is Allah, and Allah alone.
2. For the Night and
3. the Dawn,

see the following note.

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذْ أَدْبَرَ (٣٣)

33. And **by the Night** as it retreateth,

C5799. 2 The Night when it is illuminated by the Moon is light in a sense, but it is really dark and must give place to 3 the Dawn when it comes, as the harbinger of the Sun.

So in spiritual matters, when every soul realises its own responsibility, it will look less and less to reflected lights, and through the beauty of a dawn-like awakening, will be prepared more and more for the splendour of the light of Allah Himself, the goal of the Heaven of our dreams.

وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا أَسْفَرَ (٣٤)

34. And by the Dawn as it shineth forth --

إِنَّهَا لَإِحْدَى الْكُبَرِ (٣٥)

35. **This is but one** of the mighty (Portents),

C5800. "This is but one," etc.

There are numerous Signs of Allah, of which Judgment is one, and one of the mightiest portents.

Or the reference may be to the waning of the Moon, the decline of the night, and the glorious sunrise, as tokens or symbols of the world renewed when the present transitory world passes away.

According to some commentators **"This"** here refers to Hell. (R).

نَذِيرًا لِّلْبَشَرِ (٣٦)

36. A warning to mankind --

لِمَن شَاءَ مِنكُمْ أَن يَتَقَدَّمَ أَوْ يَتَأَخَّرَ (٣٧)

37. To any of you that chooses to press forward, or to follow behind --

C5801. Three interpretations are possible.

- Those pressing forward may be the Righteous, and those following behind may be the laggards, the Unbelievers, who reject Allah's love, care, and mercy.
- Men of two kinds of temperament may be referred to:

  those who are always in the van and those who are always in the rear.

Allah's Message is open to both. But there may be a danger to both:

in the one case, over-confidence, or hope in wrong things:

in the other case missing great opportunities so that their spiritual lives may be "bound in shallows and in miseries".

Extremes should be avoided.

- Or it may mean that the warning is effective only for those willing to move forwards or backwards, as the case may be, but is lost on the inert or the lethargic. For our moral and spiritual progress, we have in some cases to go forwards, but in some cases we have to retreat from false positions. The hopeless case is that of the obstinate man, whose heart is so dead that he dares not advance to the right or withdraw from the wrong.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ (٣٨)

38. Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds.

C5802. Cf. 52:21.

Man cannot shift his responsibility to vicarious saviours or saints. His redemption depends upon the grace of Allah, for which he should constantly and whole-heartedly strive by means of right conduct. If he does so he will be redeemed and he will join the Companions of the Right Hand.

إِلَّا أَصْحَابَ الْيَمِينِ (٣٩)

39. Except the Companions of the Right Hand.

C5803. Cf. n. 5223 to 56:3, and see 56:27-38.

The Companions of the Right Hand will be the Righteous or the Blessed in the Hereafter. Their grounds of merit will be Prayer, Charity, Earnestness, and Faith in Allah's just Judgment: all of which are within the reach of the humblest Seeker. They are not separate acts or virtues,

but are all inter-connected. At Judgment, the pledge of their soul will be redeemed by Allah's Grace at the Taking of the Account.

فِي جَنَّاتٍ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (٤٠)

40. (They will be) in Gardens (of Delight);
they will question each other,

عَنِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٤١)

41. And (ask) of the Sinners:

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرَ (٤٢)

42. "What led you into Hell-fire?"

قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ (٤٣)

43. They will say: "We were not of those who prayed;"

وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمُ الْمِسْكِينَ (٤٤)

44. "Nor were we of those who fed the indigent;"

وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ (٤٥)

45. "But we used to talk vanities with vain talkers;"

وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٤٦)

46. "And we used to deny the Day of Judgment,"

حَتَّى أَتَانَا الْيَقِينُ (٤٧)

47. "Until there came to us (the Hour) that is certain."

C5804. Cf. 15:99, and n. 2018.

The Hour that is Certain is usually taken to the Death. (R).

فَمَا تَنفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ (٤٨)

48. Then will no intercession of (any) intercessors profit them.

فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ التَّذْكِرَةِ مُعْرِضِينَ (٤٩)

49. Then what is the matter with them that they turn away from admonition? --

C5805. If the Day of Judgment is inevitable, it is strange that men should not heed a plain warning, but go on as if they were thoughtless and obstinate asses stampeding from a lion. Instead of heeding the warning, they try to avoid it. They are frightened at Allah's Word.

كَأَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُّسْتَنفِرَةٌ (٥٠)

50. As if they were affrighted asses,

فَرَّتْ مِن قَسْوَرَةٍ (٥١)

51. Fleeing from a lion!

بَلْ يُرِيدُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ أَن يُؤْتَىٰ صُحُفًا مُّنَشَّرَةً (٥٢)

52. Forsooth, **each one of them wants to be given** scrolls (of revelation) spread out!

C5806. Cf. 17:93: "Until thou send down to us a book, that we could read."

The Unbelievers pretend in ridicule that they would believe if a special message written on open scrolls and addressed to them severally were brought to them by a miracle! There is a disease in their hearts and understandings. The Teacher's warning is plain, and enough for any reasonable man who has the will to seek Allah.

كَلَّا بَل لَّا يَخَافُونَ الْآخِرَةَ (٥٣)

53. By no means! But they fear not the Hereafter.

كَلَّا إِنَّهُ تَذْكِرَةٌ (٥٤)

54. Nay, this surely is an admonition:

فَمَن شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ (٥٥)

55. **Let any who will**, keep it in remembrance!

C5807. The Quran itself is the admonition-the latest among the revealed Books of Allah. If man has the will to learn, he will keep the Message always before Him,

and Allah's grace will help him to carry it out in his conduct.

وَمَا يَذْكُرُونَ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ...

56. But none will keep it in remembrance except as Allah wills:

...هُوَ أَهْلُ التَّقْوَى وَأَهْلُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ (٥٦)

He is the Lord of Righteousness, and the Lord of Forgiveness.

C5808. Righteousness as well as Forgiveness have their source in Allah's Will.

Man's Righteousness has no meaning except in relation to the universal Will.

For Taqwa see n. 26 to 2:2.

If we take the word here in the sense of "the fear of Allah", the translation would be:

> "He alone is worthy to be feared, and He alone is entitled to grant Forgiveness."



أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنسَانُ أَن يُتْرَكَ سُدًى

Does man think that he will be left Suda [neglected without being punished or rewarded for the obligatory duties enjoined by his Lord (Allâh) on him]?

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Qiyamah

القِيَامَةِ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah belongs to the early Makkan period, but comes chronologically a good deal later that the last Surahs.

Its subject matter is the Resurrection, viewed from the point of view of man, especially unregenerate Man, as he is now, and as he will be then-his inner and psychological history.

C.255 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Eschew all evil: for man was created
Without purpose or without responsibility.
The Day of Account will come, and his own
Conscience bears witness that he
Must walk straight; for he must face
That Day's Realities. With patience await
The unfoldment of Allah's view. The faces
Of the Blest will beam with brightness and beauty.
For the others, Death will be terror---
For duties neglected and sins committed.
Woe unto man that he thinks not now
Of Allah's Purpose and the noble Destiny
For which Allah gave him Life and its Gifts.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ (١)

1. I do call to **witness** the Resurrection Day;

C5809. Cf. 70:40, and n. 5700.

Here the point to be enforced is understood. The appeal is made to two considerations:

- That every act has to be accounted for, and evil must have its recompense at the Resurrection; and
- that man's own spirit has a conscience which would reproach him for sin, if he did not suppress that inner voice.

وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ (٢)

2. And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit; (eschew Evil).

C5810. Our doctors postulate three states or stages of the development of the human soul:

- **Ammara** (12:53), which is prone to evil, and, if not checked and controlled, will lead to perdition;
- **Lawwama**, as here, which feels conscious of evil, and resists it, asks for Allah's grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend; it hopes to reach salvation;
- **Mutmainna** (89:27), the highest stage of all, when it achieves full rest and satisfaction. Our second stage may be compared to Conscience, except that in English usage Conscience is a faculty and not a stage in spiritual development.

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنسَانُ أَلَّن نَّجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ (٣)

3. Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones?

C5811. The Unbelievers' usual cry is: "What! when we are reduced to bones and dust, how can our personality be called to account?" (17:49).

The answer is:

Allah has said so, and He will do it; for the death here is not the end of all things.

بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَن نُّسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ (٤)

4. Nay, We are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers.

C5812. An idiom for the most delicate parts of his body.

بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ (٥)

5. But man wishes to do wrong (even) in the time in front of him.

C5813. It is bad enough not to repent of past sins. But the evil-doer who rejects a Day of Reckoning and has no conscience wants to go on in his career of sin and jeopardize his future also.

يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ (٦)

6. He questions: "**When** is the Day of Resurrection?"

C5814. The question is skeptical or derisive. He does not believe that there is any chain of consequences in the Hereafter. He does not believe in a Hereafter.

فَإِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ (٧)

7. At length, when the Sight is dazed,

C5815. At the Hour of Judgment the full light and glory of the Lord will shine, and the effulgence will daze man's eyes. For the world as we knew it will go to pieces and a new World will come into being.

وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ (٨)

8. And the moon is buried in darkness.

C5816. Not only will man's sight be dazed, but the great luminaries themselves will lose their light. The moon with its present reflected light will then cease to shine. All reflected or relative truth or goodness will sink into nothing before the true and Eternal Reality. (R).

وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ (٩)

9. And the sun and moon are joined together --

C5817. To the moon the sun is the original light, but the sun itself is a created light, and it will sink into nothingness along with the moon. Both will be like empty shells "whose lights are fled, whose glories dead", because the Light of Allah now shines in full splendour in a new World.

See n. 4344 to 39:69.

يَقُولُ الْإِنسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ الْمَفَرُّ (١٠)

10. That Day will Man say "Where is the refuge?"

كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ (١١)

11. By no means!

No place of safety!

إِلَى رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُسْتَقَرُّ (١٢)

12. Before thy Lord (alone) that Day will be the place of rest.

C5818. All good and bad deeds, positive and negative, i.e., all sins of commission and omission, and all the good that a man did and all the evil that he omitted, all the influence that he radiated before him and an that he left behind him.

يُنَبَّأُ الْإِنسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ (١٣)

13. That Day will man be told (all) that he put forward, and all that he put back.

بَلِ الْإِنسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ (١٤)

14. Nay,

man will be evidence against himself,

C5819. Cf. 24:24, and n. 2976:

"On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to their actions."

It is not what a man says about himself, or what others say of him, that determines judgment about him. It is what he is in himself. His own personality betrays him or commends him.

وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرَهُ (١٥)

15. Even though he were to put up his excuses.

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ (١٦)

16. Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'án) to make haste therewith.

C5820. Cf. 20:114, and n. 2639:

"Be not in haste with the Quran before its revelation to thee is completed."

Surah 75 is an earlier revelation, and the shade of meaning is slightly different. The immediate meaning was that the holy Prophet was to allow the revelation conveyed to him to sink into his mind and heart and not to be impatient about it; Allah would certainly complete it according to His Plan, and see that it was collected and preserved for men, and not lost; that the inspired one was to follow it and recite it as the inspiration was conveyed to him; and that it carries its own explanation according to the faculties bestowed by Allah on man.

The general meaning follows the same lines: we must not be impatient about the inspired Word; we must follow it as made clear to us by the faculties given to us by Allah.

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ (١٧)

17. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it:

فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ (١٨)

18. But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated):

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ (١٩)

19. Nay more,
it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear):

كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ (٢٠)

20. Nay, (ye men!) but ye love the fleeting life,

C5821. Cf. 21:37.

Man loves haste and things of haste. For that reason he pins his faith on transitory things that come and go, and neglects the things of lasting moment, which come slowly, and whose true import will only be fully seen in the Hereafter.

وَتَذَرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ (٢١)

21. And leave alone the Hereafter.

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ (٢٢)

22. Some faces **that Day,** will beam (in brightness and beauty) --

C5822. This passage (especially with reference to verses 26-28) would seem to refer to what our Doctors call the Lesser Judgment ***(Qiyamat-us-Sugra)***, which takes place immediately after death, and not to the Greater or General Judgment, which may be supposed to be referred to in such passages as occurs in Surah 56.

There are other passages referring to the Lesser Judgment immediately after death; e.g., 7:37 etc.

If I understand aright, the punishment of sin takes place in three ways;

- it may take place in this very life, but this may be deferred, to give the sinner respite;
- it may be an agony immediately after death; and
- in the final Resurrection, when the whole of the present order gives place to a wholly new World: 14:48.

إِلَى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ (٢٣)

23. Looking towards their Lord;

وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَاسِرَةٌ (٢٤)

24. And some faces, that Day, will be sad and dismal,

تَظُنُّ أَن يُفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ (٢٥)

25. In the thought that some back-breaking calamity was about to be inflicted on them;

كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتْ التَّرَاقِيَ (٢٦)

26. Yea, when (the soul) reaches to the collar-bone (in its exit),

C5823. A symbolic picture of the agony of death.

وَقِيلَ مَنْ رَاقٍ (٢٧)

27. And there will be a cry,
"Who is a magician (to restore him)?"

وَظَنَّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ (٢٨)

28. And he will conclude that it was (the Time) of Parting;

C5824. He = the dying man, whose soul is referred to in verse 26 above.

وَالْتَفَّتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ (٢٩)

29. And one leg **will be** joined with another:

C5825. When the soul has departed, the legs of the dead body are placed together in position, in preparation for the rites preliminary to the burial.

Saq (literally, leg) may also be taken metaphorically to mean a calamity:

calamity will be joined to calamity for the poor departed sinner's soul, as his life-story in this world is now done. Willy-nilly, he will now have to go before the Throne of Judgment.

إِلَى رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ (٣٠)

30. That Day the Drive will be (all) to thy Lord!

Section 2

فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّى (٣١)

31. So he gave nothing in charity, nor did he pray! --

C5826. His indictment in this and the succeeding verse consists of four counts:

- he neglected prayer;
- he neglected charity;
- he rejected Truth; and
- he turned away.

In 74:43-46, the four counts are

- neglecting prayer;
- neglecting charity;
- talking vanities;
- denying the Day of Judgment;

see n. 5803,

Nos. 1 and 2 are identical in both places, and Nos. 3 and 4 are analogous.

Rejecting the truth is equivalent to talking vanities and making an alliance with falsehoods. Denying the Day of Judgment means behaving as if no account was to be given of our actions, i.e., turning away from right conduct.

An additional touch is found here in verse 33. See next note.

وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (٣٢)

32. But on the contrary, He rejected Truth and turned away!

ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّى (٣٣)

33. Then did he stalk to his family in full conceit!

C5827. Conceit or arrogance is the root-cause of most Evil. By that cause fell Iblis: see 2:34.

أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰ (٣٤)

34. Woe to thee,
(O man!) yea, woe!

ثُمَّ أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰ (٣٥)

35. Again, woe to thee, (O man!), yea woe!

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنسَانُ أَن يُتْرَكَ سُدًى (٣٦)

36. Does Man think that he will be left uncontrolled, (without purpose)?

C5828. Suda: has many implications:

- uncontrolled, free to do what he likes:
- without any moral responsibility; not accountable for his actions;
- without a purpose, useless;
- forsaken.

أَلَمْ يَكُ نُطْفَةً مِّن مَّنِيٍّ يُمْنَى (٣٧)

37. Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)?

C5829. Cf. 22:5, where the argument is developed in greater detail.

The briefer argument here may be stated thus. His lowly animal origin makes him no higher than a brute; his fetal development is still that of a brute animal; then at some stage come human limbs and shape; the divine spirit is poured into him, and he is fashioned in due proportion for his higher destiny. Inspite of that the mystery of sex remains in his nature: we are living souls, yet men and women.

Allah Who creates these wonders,-has He not the power to bring the dead to life at the Resurrection?

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّى (٣٨)

38. Then did he become a leech-like clot;
then did (Allah) make and fashion (him) in due proportion.

فَجَعَلَ مِنْهُ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى (٣٩)

39. And of him He made two sexes, male and female.

أَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَن يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَى (٤٠)

40. Has not He, (the same), the power to give life to the dead?

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا

Has there not been over Man a long period of Time when he was nothing -- (not even) mentioned?

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Ad Dahr

الدَّهْر

Introduction and Summary

The revelation of this Surah was probably in the early Makkan period, with the possible exception of some verses, but its date has no particular significance.

Its theme is the contrast between the two classes of men, those who choose good and who choose evil, with special reference to the former.

The title of the Surah recalls a Pagan Arab idea, which personified Time as existing spontaneously from eternity to eternity and responsible for the misery or the happiness of

mankind. In Surah 45:24 we read: "They say... 'nothing but Time can destroy us.'" This attitude is of course wrong Time is a created thing: it has its mysteries, but it is no more eternal than matter. It is also relative to our conceptions and not absolute, as Einstein has proved, It is only Allah Who is Self-Subsisting, Eternal from the beginning and Eternal to the end, the absolute Existence and Reality. We must not transfer His attributes to any figments of our imagination.

This deification of Time (*Dahr*) as against a living personal God has given rise to the term *dahriyah*, as applied to an atheist or a materialist.

The whole of Surah is full of the highest symbolism, as in generally the case with Makkan Surahs, and this should always be remembered in their interpretation.

C.293 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Man was evolved out of nothing, through low
Beginnings; but he was given Insight
And Understanding. Allah showed him the Way;
And if man doth willfully reject the Right.
Man but chooses Chains and Yokes and a Blazing
Fire within his own soul. Not so
The Devotees of Right: they attain
The Mystics Fountain of Kafur:
For, purely out of love for Allah,
They do good to Allah's Creatures, and serve them.
The Light of Beauty and Joy will be
On them. In full felicity and honour
Will they live in the garden of Delights, and share
In the Banquet--- the Presence and Glory Divine!

****

The Righteous are patient in Constant Devotion:
Allah's Way is open to all: whoever
Has the Will, may attain to the Perfect Goal.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هَلْ أَتَىٰ عَلَى الْإِنسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا (١)

1. **Has there not been** over Man a long period **of Time** when he was nothing --

(not even) mentioned?

C5830. The undoubted fact is mentioned in the form of a question, to get the assent of man. It is certain that the physical world existed long before man was ever heard of or mentioned, as geological records prove. It is also true that the world existed long before man came on the scene:

see 2:30-31. Man is here taken in a generic sense.

C5831. Dahr is Time as a whole, or for a long period.

Time used to be deified by the Pagan Arabs, as explained in the introduction to this Surah. An analogy can be found in the Greek ideas connected with Chronos or Kronos, themselves a blend of different myths. Kronos (or Time), they said, was the father of Zeus himself. (R).

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (٢)

2. Verily We created Man from a drop **of mingled sperm**, in order to try him:

so We gave him (the gifts) of Hearing and Sight.

C5832. Mingled: the female ovum has to be fertilised with the male sperm before a new animal can be born. Man as an animal has this humble origin. But he has been given the gift of certain faculties of receiving instruction (typified by Hearing) and of intellectual and spiritual insight (typified by Sight).

His life has therefore a meaning: with a certain amount of free-will, he is to be vicegerent on earth (2:30). But he must be trained and tried, and that is the whole problem of human life.

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا (٣)

3. We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will).

C5833. Besides the gift of the faculties, Man has been shown the Way by means of Revelation, through men of the highest spiritual standing.

If he is grateful, he will accept Guidance, be of the Righteous, and join the company of the Blessed.

If not, he puts chains round himself, thus burdening himself with sin, and gets into the Blazing Fire of Punishment. See next verse. His choice rests on his will. (R).

إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلَا وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا (٤)

4. For the Rejecters We have prepared
   - Chains,
   - Yokes, and
   - a Blazing Fire.

C5834. Cf. 13:5, 34:33, 40:71 [Eds.]

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِن كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا (٥)

5. As to the Righteous, they shall drink of a Cup (of Wine) mixed with **Kafur** --

C5835. Kafur is literally Camphor. It is a fountain in the Realms of Bliss. It is a seasoning added to the Cup of pure, beatific Wine, which causes no intoxication (56:18-19), but stands for all that is wholesome, agreeable, and refreshing.

Camphor is cool and refreshing, and is given as a soothing tonic in Eastern medicine. In minute doses its odour and flavour are also agreeable. (R).

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا (٦)

6. A Fountain where the Devotees of Allah do drink, making it flow in unstinted abundance.

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ ...

7. **They** perform (their) **vows** ...

C5836. They: i.e., the Righteous: they are known in the present life by the virtues described in verses 7-10, and in the life of the Hereafter they will enjoy the Bliss described in verses 11-22.

C5837. Cf. 22:29.

The vows must be vows of spiritual service, which of course includes service to humanity, such as is mentioned in the next verse. They are Devotees of Allah, and they must perform all vows and contracts (5:I and n. 682). Vows of the Pagan sort, savouring of a sort of "bribe" to the Deity, are not approved.

... وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا (٧)

... and they fear a Day whose evil flies far and wide.

C5838. That is, they prepare for the Judgment to come, where the effects of Sin will not be transitory but far-reaching.

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا (٨)

8. And they feed, for the love of Allah,

- the indigent,
- the orphan,
- and the captive --

C5839. The captive: when taken literally, it refers to the old state of things when captives of war had to earn their own food, or their own redemption;

even ordinary prisoners in jail for criminal offences often starved unless food was provided for them by private friends or from their own earnings.

But there is a further symbolic meaning, which applies to the indigent, the orphans, and the captives, viz, those who are so in a spiritual sense: those have no mental or moral resources, or have no one to look after them, or are held down in social or moral or economic

captivity. they hunger for spiritual food, or perhaps their appreciate is deadened, but the righteous understand and supply their real needs.

It has also been held that "captive" include dumb animals who are under subjection to man; they must be properly fed, housed, and looked after; and the righteous man does not forget them.

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَاء وَلَا شُكُورًا (٩)

9. (Saying),

"We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: No reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.

C5840. These words need not be actually uttered. They express the true motives of pious and unpretentious Charity.

إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِن رَّبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا (١٠)

10. "We only fear a Day of distressful Wrath from the side of our Lord."

C5841. It is a Day of Distress for sin and evil. But the truly righteous are not self-righteous. They have the fear of Allah in their minds: they know they are human, and they fear lest they should be found wanting in the sight of Allah. But Allah in His Mercy gives them a bountiful Reward.

فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا (١١)

11. But Allah will deliver them from the evil of that Day,

and will **shed over them a light** of Beauty and a (blissful) Joy.

C5842. Cf. 75:22-23.

وَجَزَاهُم بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا (١٢)

12. And because they were patient and constant,

He will reward them with a Garden and (garments of) silk.

C5843. Cf. 22:23.

مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ...

13. Reclining in the (Garden) on raised thrones,

C5844. Cf. 18:31.

... لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا (١٣)

they will see there neither the sun's (excessive heat) nor (the moon's) excessive cold.

C5845. The sun and the moon as we know them will be no longer there. It will be a new world on a different plane. But to give us an idea of comfort we recall the excessive heat of the sun especially in tropical climates, and the excessive cold of the moon especially in northern climates, and we negative them both. That is, the temperature will be just that delightful one that is most agreeable to our sensations as we know them now. The moon is not mentioned, but **Zamharir** (excessive cold) is sometimes used for the moon. (R).

وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلَالُهَا وَذُلِّلَتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذْلِيلًا (١٤)

14. And the shades of the (Garden) will come low over them,
and the bunches (of fruit), there, will hang low in humility.

C5846. Without sun and moon there will of course be no shade in the literal sense of the word. But for full comfort, there will be sheltering shade for rest and change from whatever light there be.

But the whole idea here is that of humility. Even the shadows show humility: Cf. 13:15.

So does the fruit in hanging low for man. Man has now reached the height of his dignity. (R).

وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِآنِيَةٍ مِّن فِضَّةٍ ...

15. And amongst them will be passed round vessels of silver ...

C5847. Cf. 43:71, where "dishes and goblets of gold" are mentioned.

The idea conveyed is that of rarity, preciousness, and spotless splendour. (R).

... وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَا (١٥)

... and goblets of crystal --

قَوَارِيرَ مِن فِضَّةٍ ...

16. Crystal-clear, made of silver:

C5848. That is, silver polished and white, and shining like crystal.

... قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا (١٦)

they will determine the measure thereof (according to their wishes).

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنجَبِيلًا (١٧)

17. And they will be given to drink there of a Cup (of Wine) **mixed** with **Zanjabil** --

C5849. Cf. above, 76:5-6, and n. 5835, where the Cup of **Kafur** (Camphor) was mentioned for coolness and refreshment to the Righteous, who had just passed the great Event of Judgment.

The second stage is described in verses 12-14, when they enter the Garden in Garments of Silk, and find that their former humility in the probationary life is rewarded with high honour in the new world they have entered.

The third stage is in verses 15-21, where they settle down in Bliss, with Garments of fine silk and heavy brocades, with Ornaments and Jewels, with an ordered Feast of set service, and the Cup of **Zanjabil**. This word literally means Ginger. In Eastern medicine Ginger is administered to give warmth to the body and zest to the taste; this is appropriate for the Royal Feast which is now figured forth. (R).

عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا (١٨)

18. A fountain there, called **Salsabil**.

C5850. Salsabil: literally means "Seek the Way". The Way is now open to the presence of the Most High.

The Banquet is spread. Get thyself ready. It is a "Realm Magnificent" (verse 20) in a new spiritual world. (R).

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ ...

19. And round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness):

C5851. Cf. 56:17 and n. 5231.

... إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَّنثُورًا (١٩)

if thou seest them, thou wouldst think them scattered Pearls.

C5852. Pearls for beauty and splendour: scattered, because they are moving to and fro all round the Banquet.

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيرًا (٢٠)

20. And when thou lookest,

it is there thou wilt see a Bliss and a Realm Magnificent.

... عَالِيَهُمْ ثِيَابُ سُندُسٍ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوا أَسَاوِرَ مِن فِضَّةٍ

21. Upon them will be green Garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, and they will be adorned with Bracelets of silver;

C5853. Cf. 18:31. The bracelets are there said to be of gold.

وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا (٢١)

and their Lord will give to them to drink of a Wine Pure and Holy.

C5854. This would seem to be the culmination of the honour which the Blessed receive at the Royal and Divine Banquet. The words in the next verse express the sort of speech which will make the Guest a denizen of Heaven. (R).

إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاء وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُم مَّشْكُورًا (٢٢)

22. "Verily this is a Reward for you,

and your Endeavor is accepted and recognized."

Section 2

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنزِيلًا (٢٣)

23. It is We Who have sent down the Qur'án to thee by stages.

C5855. The Quran was being revealed stage by stage as the occasion demanded and at the date of this Sura it was still one of the earlier stages. Persecution, abuse, and false charges were being leveled against the man of Allah, but he is bidden to stand firm and do his duty. In a minor degree this applies to all of us who suffer in the cause of Truth.

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ آثِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا (٢٤)

24. Therefore be patient with constancy to the Command of thy Lord,

and hearken not to the sinner or the ingrate among them.

وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٢٥)

25. And **celebrate the name** of thy Lord morning and evening,

C5856. Three methods of Prayer and Devotion are mentioned:

1. to remember and celebrate the holy name of Allah always;
2. to spend a part of the night in humble prostration; and
3. to glorify Him in the long hours of a weary night of waiting and watching.

As to 1, "morning and evening" means all the waking hours of our life, but in the special hours of morning and evening the physical world without us, and the inner world within us, combine to make us specially receptive of spiritual influences.

The "name" of Allah includes His attributes, as a locked golden casket might include priceless jewels. Any one may carry the casket, even though he may not be worthy to handle the jewels, If he carries the casket, he is in potential possession of the jewels, and he hopes

some time to get the key which opens the jewels to him. So the tyro, who celebrates the holy name of Allah, hopes some day to see the "Face" of Allah and be blessed with the privilege of proximity to His Person.

For 2 and 3 see next note. (R).

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا (٢٦)

26. And part of the night, prostrate thyself to Him;
and **glorify Him** a long night through.

C5857. See last note.

2 Humble prostration to Allah means some visible mode of dedication. That is best done at night, when the soul, free from worldly occupations, is alone with its God.

3 The weary hours of a long night are no longer weary, but become full of meaning when we join in concert with the whole Creation, which glorifies Allah: 57:1.

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ يُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُونَ وَرَاءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيلًا (٢٧)

27. As to these, **they** love the **fleeting life**, and **put away behind them** a Day (that will be) hard.

C5858. Fleeting life: Cf. 75:20.

They: the immediate reference was to the Pagan Quraish:

the general reference is to the Unbelievers of all ages. They reject, or at least put away the thought of, a Hereafter, a Day that will be hard, for the easy pleasures of a fleeting life.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ ...

28. It is We Who created them, and We have made their joints strong;

C5859. Allah has not only created men, but "made their joints strong", i.e., given them the power and strength to withstand the temptations of Evil and stand firmly in the Path of Right,

... وَإِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَالَهُمْ تَبْدِيلًا (٢٨)

but, when We will, We can substitute **the like of them** by a complete change.

C5860. If, in spite of Allah's loving care, any particular men or group of men, misuse their powers or willfully disobey Allah's Law, Allah will set them aside, and substitute others in their place, with like powers.

Allah's gifts are free, but let no one think that he can monopolise them or misuse them without being called to answer for the trust. And the man of Allah must not be discouraged by the whole world being at some moment completely against him. Allah can in a moment make a complete change. Either the same men that fought against him will be his zealous adherents, Or another generation will spring up, which will carry the flag of Righteousness to victory. Allah's Will and Plan work in their own good time.

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَن شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَى رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا (٢٩)

29. This is an admonition: whosoever will, let him take a (straight) Path to his Lord.

وَمَا تَشَاؤُونَ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ...

30. But ye will not, except as Allah wills;

C5861. Man in himself is weak; he must seek Allah's Grace; without it he can do nothing; with it he can do all, For Allah knows all things, and His wisdom comprehends the good of all.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٣٠)

for Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

يُدْخِلُ مَن يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ...

31. He will admit to His Mercy Whom He will;

C5862. That is according to His just and wise Plan. If the will is right, it obtains Allah's Grace and Mercy. If the will of man rejects Allah, man must suffer the Penalty.

... وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٣١)

but the wrongdoers -- for them has He prepared a grievous Penalty.



The Absolute Reality

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

And when it is said to them: "Bow down yourself (in prayer)!" They bow not down (offer not their prayers). Woe that Day to the deniers (of the Day of Resurrection)!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Mursalat

الْمُرْسَلَاتِ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah belongs to the early makkan period, somewhere near to Surah 75 (Al Qioyamah). The theme is somewhat similar. UIt denouces the horrors of the Hereafter, for those who rejected Truth. The refrain, "Ah woe, that day, to the Rejecters of Truth!" which occures ten times in its fifty verses, or, on an average once in every five verses, indicates the leitmotif.

C.257 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The winds in the world of nature are types
Of Allah's Bounty and Power: they gently bring
The beneficent rain, and when roused to wrath,
They clean the world and wipe out Infection
So works Allah's Revelation, in sun shine
And storm. It will root out Evil, and restore
True values at Judgement. Truly terrible
Will be that Day for the evil ones.
It will be a Day of Sorting out:
Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!
Will man not learn from his own little story,
Or from nature around him? The Blazing Fire
Will be indeed an enveloping Punishment.
How dreadful the contrast with the Bliss of the Righteous!
Learn, ye, therefore, Humility, and approach
Allah's Throne in Repentance and Earnest Endevour.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالْمُرْسَلَاتِ ...

1. By the (Winds) Sent Forth...

C5863. This Sura begins with an appeal to five things, as pointing to the substantive statement in verse 7, that the Day of Justice and Judgment is bound to come, and we must prepare for it. It is difficult to translate, but easy to understand, if we remember that a triple thread of allegory runs through this passage (verses 1-7). The five things or phases, which will be presently considered in detail, refer to

a. Winds in the physical world,

b. Angels in the Kingdom of Allah, and

c. Prophets in the human world, connecting it with the Kingdom of Allah.

عُرْفًا (١) ...

... one after another (to man's profit);

C5864. Understanding the reference to Winds, we can see that they are powerful factors in the government of the physical world.

1. They come gently as harbingers of the blessings of rain and fertility (15:22; 30:48); but
2. they can come as violent tornadoes, uprooting and destroying (51:41-42);
3. they can scatter seeds far and wide, and
4. they can separate chaff from grain, or clear the air from epidemics; and
5. they literally carry sound, and therefore Messages. All these things point to the power and goodness of Allah, and we are asked to believe that His promise of Mercy and Justice in the Hereafter is indeed true.

Cf. this passage with 51:1-6 (Al Dharriyat) with which it has many affinities,

فَالْعَاصِفَاتِ عَصْفًا (٢)

2. Which then blow violently in tempestuous Gusts,

C5865. If we understand the reference to be, not to Winds, but to Angels, they are agencies in the Kingdom of Allah, which carry out similar functions, changing and revolutionising the face of the world.

1. They come softly, on beneficent errands of Mercy;
2. they are charged with the mission of punishment and destruction for sin as in the case of the two angels who came to Lut (15:57-66);
3. they distribute Allah's Mercies as the Winds distribute good seeds;
4. they sort out the good from the evil among men; and

5. they are the agency through which Allah's Messages and Revelations are conveyed to the Prophets (see No. 5 in the last note).

وَالنَّاشِرَاتِ نَشْرًا (٣)

3. And scatter (things) far and wide;

فَالْفَارِقَاتِ فَرْقًا (٤)

4. Then separate them, one from another,

فَالْمُلْقِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا (٥)

5. Then spread abroad a Message,

C5866. If we understand the reference to Prophets or Messengers of Allah, or the verses of Revelation which would be particularly appropriate for verses 5-6, we also get a satisfactory solution of the Allegory.

1. The Prophets have followed one another in a series: the verses of the Quran came, one after another as needed; in both cases it was for man's spiritual profit;
2. they caused great disturbance in a spiritual decadent world; they pulled down evil institutions root and branch, and substituted new ones;
3. they proclaimed their truths far and wide, without fear and without favour;
4. through them were sorted out men of Faith and rebels against Allah's Law; and
5. they gave a Message, through which just men were justified through repentance, and evil men were warned of their sins.

Some Commentators take one or other of these allegories, and some apply one allegory to a few of these verses, and another to another few.

In my opinion the Allegory is wide enough to comprehend all the meanings which I have sketched. I wish a translation could do justice to those marvelously terse sentences in the original.

عُذْرًا أَوْ نُذْرًا (٦)

6. Whether of Justification or of Warning --

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعٌ (٧)

7. Assuredly, what ye are promised must come to pass.

فَإِذَا النُّجُومُ طُمِسَتْ (٨)

8. Then when the stars become dim;

C5867. The lustre of the stars will become dim; in fact they will disappear: cf. 81:2, and 82:2.

The heaven's canopy will be torn asunder: cf. 82:1, and 73:18.

The mountains will be uprooted and fly about like dust: cf. 69:14; 81:3; etc.

All the old landmarks of the physical world as we know it will be swept away. (R).

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ فُرِجَتْ (٩)

9. When the heaven is cleft asunder;

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ (١٠)

10. When the mountains are scattered (to the winds) as dust;

وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أُقِّتَتْ (١١)

11. And when the messengers are (all) appointed a time (to collect) --

C5868. The Resurrection will be established. In the world which will then have passed away, inspired Prophets had been sent in succession at different times to all nations. Now they will be gathered together in one place before the Judgment-seat to bear witness as to the righteous or the evil ones within their respective spheres of work.

Cf. 39:69.

لِأَيِّ يَوْمٍ أُجِّلَتْ (١٢)

12. For what Day are these (Portents) deferred?

لِيَوْمِ الْفَصْلِ (١٣)

13. For the Day of Sorting out.

C5869. Cf. 37:21 and n. 4047; also 44:40, and (n. 4718).

That will be the Day of Judgment or Day of Decision. Good will then be completely separated from Evil. And the men who rejected Truth and flourished on Falsehood will find that in the world of Realities they will be absolutely nowhere. Hence the refrain of this Surah.

"Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!"

it sounds like a dirge on Sin.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ (١٤)

14. And what will explain to thee what is the Day of Sorting out?

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٥)

15. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

أَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٦)

16. Did We not destroy **the men of old** (for their evil)?

C5870. Allah's Law is always the same. Sin or corruption prepares its own destruction. It was so with the generation of Noah. In Arab tradition it was so with the 'Ad and the Thamud.

In our own day we see relics of prehistoric civilisations, in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and the Aegean: these were men of wonderful skill and resource, but they went under. If our generations, which pride themselves on their science and skill, desert Allah's Law, they will be certain to meet the same fate.

ثُمَّ نُتْبِعُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ (١٧)

17. So shall We make later (generations) follow them.

كَذَٰلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ (١٨)

18. Thus do We deal with men of sin.

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٩)

19. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

أَلَمْ نَخْلُقكُّم مِّن مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ (٢٠)

20. Have We not created you from a fluid (held) despicable? --

C5871. Cf. 32:8, n. 3638.

Man is ashamed of the process of physical creation, by which he comes into being. Yet he is arrogant in life and neglectful of the Future.

فَجَعَلْنَاهُ فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ (٢١)

21. The which We placed in a place of rest, firmly fixed.

C5872. See n. 2873 to 23:13.

The silent growth in the mother's womb, and the protection and sustenance which the growing life receives from the life of the mother, are themselves wonders of creation.

إِلَىٰ قَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (٢٢)

22. For a period (of gestation), determined (according to need)?

C5873. The period roughly of nine months and ten days is subject to many adjustments. In fact throughout our prenatal as well as post-natal life there are wonderful and nicely-balanced adjustments of which we are ourselves unconscious. Should we not turn in love and gratitude to Allah our Creator?

فَقَدَرْنَا ...

23. For We do determine (according to need);

... فَنِعْمَ الْقَادِرُونَ (٢٣)

for We are the Best to determine (things)!

C5874. Perhaps the life in the womb, in relation to the life after birth, is an allegory for our probationary life on earth in relation to the eternal Life to come. Perhaps, also, our state when we are buried in the tomb suggests an allegory to the life in the womb, in relation to the life in the Hereafter.

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٤)

24. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ كِفَاتًا (٢٥)

25. Have We not made the earth (as a place) to draw together

أَحْيَاءً وَأَمْوَاتًا (٢٦)

26. The living and the dead,

C5875. What a wonderful parable! The earth is a place where death and life, decay and growth and decay, green grass, stubble, and fuel, corruption and purification jostle together,-one often leading to the other. The drama which we see with our own eyes in this world should enable us to appreciate the wonders in the Kingdom of Allah where the despised and rejected receive the highest honour, Lazarus rests in Abraham's bosom, and the Pharaoh is led in chains for his arrogance and his sin.

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ شَامِخَاتٍ ...

27. And made therein mountains **standing firm,** lofty (in stature);

C5876. See n. 2038 to 16:15.

The solid mountains are frequently referred to: cf. 13:3.

The parable here is that the mountains are hard, solid rock, and yet they act as sponges to collect, store up, and filter sweet and wholesome water, which on account of their altitude they are able to distribute by gravity to

the lower, dry land by means of rivers or springs. Any one who has seen the parched Makkan valleys and the delicious springs in the mountains around, or the Zubayda Canal, which used to be the main source of Makkah's water-supply, will appreciate the aptness of the metaphor, but it applies to any country, though not to so striking a degree. If the wisdom and power of Allah can do such things before your eyes, how can you reject His teaching of a still more wonderful future Life?

... وَأَسْقَيْنَاكُم مَّاء فُرَاتًا (٢٧)

and provided for you water sweet (and wholesome)?

وَيْلٌ يوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٢٨)

28. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

انطَلِقُوا إِلَى مَا كُنتُم بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (٢٩)

29. (It will be said:)

"Depart ye to that which ye used to reject as false!

انطَلِقُوا إِلَى ظِلٍّ ...

30. "Depart ye to a Shadow (of smoke ascending) ...

C5877. The Sinners, instead of reposing in cool shades, will only see the blazing Fire. The only shadow they will see will be that of Smoke, ascending in three columns, right, left, and above, i.e., completely enveloping them. But it will give no comfort or coolness. On the contrary, it will contain huge sparks. (R).

... ذِي ثَلَاثِ شُعَبٍ (٣٠)

... in three columns,

لَا ظَلِيلٍ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنَ اللَّهَبِ (٣١)

31. "(Which yields) no shade of coolness, and is of no use against the fierce Blaze.

إِنَّهَا تَرْمِي بِشَرَرٍ كَالْقَصْرِ (٣٢)

32. "Indeed it throws about sparks (huge) as Forts,

C5878. Qasr: Fort, big building, palace.

An alternative reading is **Qasar**, plural of **Qasarat** (-un),'meaning bundies of wood used for fuel: Ibn Abbas *apud* Bukhari.

I almost prefer this latter reading.

كَأَنَّهُ جِمَالَتٌ صُفْرٌ (٣٣)

33. "As if there were (a string of) yellow camels (marching swiftly)."

C5879. The yellow sparks flying swiftly one after another suggest a string of camels marching swiftly, such as the Arabs of Nejd and central Arabia are so proud of.

There is a double allegory. It refers not only to the colour and the rapid succession of sparks, but to the vanity of worldly pride, as much as to say: "your fine yellow camels in which you took such pride in the world are but sparks that fly away and even sting you in the Hereafter!"

Smoke with sparks may also assume fantastic shapes like long-necked camels.

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٣٤)

34. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

هَذَا يَوْمُ لَا يَنطِقُونَ (٣٥)

35. That will be a Day when they shall not be able to speak,

C5880. They will be dumbfounded; i.e., (when read with the next verse), they will not be in a position to put forward any valid defence or plea. Facts will speak too plainly against them. They might perversely try to deny false worship: 6:23: but their own tongues and limbs will bear witness against them: 24:24. Nor does the fighting out or settling of doctrinal disputes in the Hereafter (39:31) amount to putting forward pleas in defence.

وَلَا يُؤْذَنُ لَهُمْ فَيَعْتَذِرُونَ (٣٦)

36. Nor will it be open to them to put forth pleas.

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٣٧)

37. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ جَمَعْنَاكُمْ وَالْأَوَّلِينَ (٣٨)

38. That will be a Day of Sorting out!
We shall Gather you together and those before (you)!

C5881. We may suppose this as spoken primarily to the Quraish who were plotting against the Prophet. You may use all your wisdom and that of your ancestors, but you will not be able to defeat Allah or His Plan.

See next verse.

فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُونِ (٣٩)

39. Now, if ye have a trick (or plot), use it against Me!

C5882. The plots against the holy Prophet were plots against Allah's Truth, and therefore against Allah.

Can any one hope to profit by such plots?

Can any one defeat Allah's Plan and Purpose?

Let them try. They will only ruin themselves, as the Pagan leaders did. There can only be pity for such men. What will be their state in the Hereafter?

"Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Allah's Truth!"

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٠)

40. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

Section 2

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي ظِلَالٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٤١)

41. As to the Righteous, they shall be amidst (cool) shades and springs (of water).

C5883. This is in contrast to the triple shade of smoke and sin for the sinners, which neither gives them coolness nor protects them from the Blazing Fire.

The Shade, i.e. Covering, of Allah's Good Pleasure, will be the greatest Boon of all, and the Spring of Allah's Love will be inexhaustible. (R).

وَفَوَاكِهَ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ (٤٢)

42. And (they shall have) fruits, all they desire.

C5884. Fruits: see n. 4671 to 43:73. (R).

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٤٣)

43. "Eat ye and drink ye to your heart's content:
for that ye worked (Righteousness)."

C5885. The fruits of righteousness are contentment in this life and the supreme Bliss in the next.

إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٤٤)

44. Thus do We certainly reward the Doers of Good.

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٥)

45. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

كُلُوا وَتَمَتَّعُوا قَلِيلًا ...

46. (O ye Unjust!) Eat ye and enjoy yourselves (but) a little while, ...

C5886. "Eat" is symbolical of having the good things of life in this world. It may be that they are only given for a trial. Because their minds and wishes run to wrong things, the opportunities for wrong are multiplied, as the impetus for good or for evil increases progressively. They are asked to believe and repent. But if they do not, they are to be pitied, even for the good things of this life, for they will come to an evil End in the Hereafter.

... إِنَّكُم مُّجْرِمُونَ (٤٦)

... for that ye are Sinners.

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٧)

47. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ (٤٨)

48. And when it is said to them, "Prostrate yourselves!"
They do not so.

C5887. Prostration is a symbol of humility and a desire to get nearer to Allah by Prayer and a good life. Those who refuse to adopt this Path are to be pitied: how will they fare at Judgment?

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (٤٩)

49. Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of truth!

فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٠)

50. Then what Message, after that, will they believe in?

C5888. "That" may refer to verse 48:

they were given plain and clear Guidance, and they refused to accept it: after that what kind of Message will they accept?

The Guidance referred to is obviously that of Islam or the Quran.



إِنَّا أَنذَرْنَاكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيبًا يَوْمَ يَنظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ

Verily, We have warned you of a Penalty near -- the Day when man will see (the Deeds) which his hands have sent forth,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Naba'

النَّبَإِ

Introduction and Summary

This beautiful Makkan Surah is not quite so early as the last (Sura 77) nor quite so late as Sura 76, but nearer in time to the later

It sets forth Allah's loving care in a fine nature passage, and deduces from it the Promise of the Future, when Evil will be destroyed and Good will come to its own; and invites all who have the will, to seek refuge with their Lord.

C.258 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The Great News for man, in his spiritual Destiny,
Is the Judgement to come, the Day of Sorting Out.
Do not the Power, the Goodness, and the Justice
Of Allah reveal themselves in all nature?
The Panorama around us, the voice in our souls,
And the harmony between heaven and earth?
That Day is sure to arrive at its time
Appointed, when behold! the present order
Will pass away. Then will the Fruits
Of Evil appear, and the Fruits of Righteousness.
Allah's blessings will be more than the merits of men;
But who can argue with the Fountain of Grace?
And who can prevent the course of Justice?
Let us then, before it becomes too late,
Betake ourselves to our Lord Most Gracious!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءلُونَ (١)

1. Concerning what are they disputing?

عَنِ النَّبَإِ الْعَظِيمِ (٢)

2. Concerning the Great News,

C5889. Great News: usually understood to mean the News or Message of the Resurrection or the Hereafter, about which there are various schools of thought among the Jews and Christians and other nations. There is practically nothing about the Resurrection in the Old Testament, and the Jewish sect of Sadducees even in the time of Christ denied the Resurrection altogether.

The Pagan ideas of a future life -if any- varied from place to place and from time to time. Even in the early Christian Church, as we learn from Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, there were contentions in that little community (1, Corinthians, i. 11), and some definitely denied the resurrection of the dead (ib., xv. 12).

Great News may also be translated Great Message or a Message Supreme as I have translated at 38:67. In that case it would refer to the Quran, or the Message of Revelation, or the Message of the Holy Prophet, about which there was great contention in those days. As this Message also lays great stress on the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection, the practical result by either mode of interpretation amounts to the same.

الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ (٣)

3. About which they cannot agree.

كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (٤)

4. Verily, they shall soon (come to) know!

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (٥)

5. Verily, verily they shall soon (come to) know!

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا (٦)

6. Have We not made the earth as a **wide** expanse,

C5890. See n. 2038 to 16:15. Cf. also 13:3 and 15:19.

The spacious expanse of the earth may be compared to a carpet, to which the mountains act as pegs. The Sips of Allah are thus enumerated:

- the great panorama of outer nature (verses 6-7);
- the creation of Man in pairs, with the succession of rest and work fitting in with the succession of night and day (verses 8-11);
- the firmaments above, with their splendid lights (verses 12-13); and

- the clouds and rain and abundant harvests, which knit sky and earth and man together (verses 14-16).

These point to Allah, and Allah's Message points to the Future Life.

وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا (٧)

7. And the mountains as pegs?

وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا (٨)

8. And (have We not) created you in pairs,

وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا (٩)

9. And made your sleep for rest,

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا (١٠)

10. And made the night as a covering,

C5891. The darkness of the night is as a covering. Just as a covering protects us from exposure to cold or heat, so this covering gives us spiritual respite from the buffets of the material world, and from the tiring activities of our own inner exertions. The rest in sleep (in verse 9) is supplemented by the covering of the night with which we are provided by Allah.

وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا (١١)

11. And made the day as means of subsistence?

C5892. "Subsistence" in English only partly covers the idea of **maash**, which includes every kind of life activity. The Day is specially illuminated, so runs the figure of speech, in order that these life-activities of all kinds may be fully exercised.

وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا (١٢)

12. And (have We not) built over you the seven firmaments,

C5893. See n. 5526 to 65:12 and n. 2876 to 23:17, also 37:66 and notes there.

وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا (١٣)

13. And placed (therein) a Light of Splendor?

C5894. That is, the sun.

Cf. 25:61; 33:46 (where it is used metaphorically for the holy Prophet); and 71:16.

وَأَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاء ثَجَّاجًا (١٤)

14. And do We not send down from the clouds water in abundance,

C5895. Note how the evidences of Allah and His beneficence are set out in four groups.

1. Look to external nature on the earth around you (verses 6-7);
2. your own nature, physical, mental and spiritual (verses 8-11);
3. the starry heavens, and the glory of the sun (verses 12-13); and
1. the interdependence of earth, air, and sky in the cycle of water, clouds, rain, corn and gardens, all serving in their several ways to further the whole plan of the World as it affects us.

Can you not then believe that a Creator who does this will sort out Good and Evil on an appointed Day with real justice and power?

لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا (١٥)

15. That We may produce therewith corn and vegetables,

وَجَنَّاتٍ أَلْفَافًا (١٦)

16. And gardens of luxurious growth?

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (١٧)

17. Verily the Day of Sorting Out is a thing appointed --

C5896. Cf. 37:21, n. 4047, and 36:59, n. 4005 (end),

The Day of Judgment is the Day of Sorting Out, as between Good and Evil.

يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا (١٨)

18. The Day that the Trumpet shall be sounded, and ye shall come forth in crowds;

C5897. The angel charged with the sounding of the Trumpet is Israfil. It will herald Judgment. Cf. 50:20; also 39:68, and n. 4343; and 69:13, n. 5648.

وَفُتِحَتِ السَّمَاء فَكَانَتْ أَبْوَابًا (١٩)

19. And the heavens shall be opened as if there were doors,

C5898. A sign that the present order of things will have ceased to exist, and a new world will have come into being. Such a figure applies to the heavens in this verse and to the earth in the next verse. The mystery of what is beyond the heavens will have vanished through the doors which will then be opened. The solid mountains, as we suppose them to be, will have vanished like an unsubstantial mirage.

وَسُيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا (٢٠)

20. And the mountains shall vanish, as if they were a mirage.

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا (٢١)

21. Truly Hell is as a place of ambush --

C5899. Hell, the embodiment of evil, is lying in wait like an ambush for every one. We should be on our guard. For the transgressors, those who have willfully rebelled against Allah, it will be a definite destination, from which there is no return, except, it may be, after ages, i.e., unless Allah so wills:

Cf. 6:128, and n. 951.

لِلطَّاغِينَ مَآبًا (٢٢)

22. For the transgressors a place of destination:

لَابِثِينَ فِيهَا أَحْقَابًا (٢٣)

23. They will dwell therein for ages.

لَّا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا (٢٤)

24. Nothing cool shall they tastes therein, nor any drink,

إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا (٢٥)

25. Save a boiling fluid and a fluid, dark, murky, intensely cold --

C5900. Cf. 10:4, and n. 1390; also 38:57, and n. 4213.

جَزَاءً وِفَاقًا (٢٦)

26. A fitting recompense (for them).

C5901. Their transgressions go on progressively as they refuse to repent and turn to Allah. The fire of misery begins to blaze forth more and more fiercely, an there is nothing to cool that blaze; their food and drink themselves are tainted with the disorder of contradictory elements,-boiling hot drink, with intensely cold, murky, and disgusting fluids. These are fitting punishments for their crimes, which are inconsistent with the pure and gentle mould in which Allah had originally cast their nature.

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا (٢٧)

27. For that they used not to fear any account (for their deeds),

C5902. It was not isolated acts, but a continued course of evil conduct; they repudiated the moral and spiritual responsibility for their lives; and they impudently called Truth itself by false names and disdained Allah's Signs, which were vouchsafed for their instruction. These are not mere impressions; these are hard facts "preserved on record", so that every deed can have its due weight in making up the account,

وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كِذَّابًا (٢٨)

28. But they (impudently) treated Our Signs as false.

وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كِتَابًا (٢٩)

29. And all things have We preserved on record.

فَذُوقُوا فَلَن نَّزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا (٣٠)

30. "So taste ye (the fruits of your deeds); for no increase shall We grant you, except in Punishment."

C5903. Just as there is a progressive deterioration in the sinner's soul when he surrenders himself to evil, so there is a progressive increase in the Penalty which he suffers.

Section 2

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا (٣١)

31. Verily for the righteous there will be a fulfillment of (the Heart's) desires;

C5904. This is true Salvation. It is not only safety and felicity, but the attainment of the final Goal, the supreme Achievement, the Fulfilment of the highest in human nature, the satisfaction of the true and pure desires of the heart,-seeing the "Face of Allah". See n. 4733 to 44:57.

حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا (٣٢)

32. Gardens enclosed, and Grapevines;

C5905. The supreme Achievement, or the Fulfilment of the Heart's Desires, spoken of in the last verse, is now described in three illustrations (verses 32-34), as further explained by two negatives (verse 35).

- The first is the enclosed Fruit-Garden, represented by the Grape. The Garden in its many aspects is the most frequent expression adopted for Bliss. The most carefully-tended Garden is a Fruit-Garden, with walls all round to protect it, and the most characteristic fruit mentioned here is the luscious Grape. (R).

وَكَوَاعِبَ أترَابًا (٣٣)

33. Companions of Equal Age;

C5906.

- The second symbol is Companions of Equal Age. Maidens or Virgins, symbols of purity, grace, innocence, truth, and sympathy. (R).

وَكَأسًا دِهَاقًا (٣٤)

34. And a Cup full (to the Brim).

C5907.

- The third symbol, the Cup, takes us partly to the Grapes mentioned in verse 32 and partly to the Springs or Rivers mentioned with the Garden in so many places.

  Full to the brim brings to our mind the unbounded Bounty of Allah.

لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذَّابًا (٣٥)

35. No Vanity shall they hear therein, nor Untruth --

C5908. The explanation of the three illustrations is made further clear by the two negatives.

1. There will be no talk of vanities, such as are usually associated on this earth with pleasant Gardens, Companions of equal age, or generous Cups flowing in Assemblies.
2. There will be no Untruth or Falsehood. Insincerity or Hollowness there. Everything will be on a plane of absolute Truth and Reality.

جَزَاء مِّن رَّبِّكَ عَطَاء حِسَابًا (٣٦)

36. Recompense from thy Lord, a Gift, (amply) sufficient --

C5909. The Recompense is not exactly a Reward in proportion to merit, but is rather a Gift or a Bounty from the Merciful- a Gift most amply sufficient to satisfy all desire on that plane of purity.

"A Gift (amply) sufficient" might almost be translated: a liberal and bountiful gift.

Cf. the phrase, **A 'ta fa ahsaba** = he gave generously, or bountifully. (R).

رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الرحْمَنِ ...

37. (From) the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all between -- (Allah) Most Gracious:

C5910. No one has the right or the power to argue with Allah about the Gifts which He may bestow on His devotees beyond their deserts, (verse 36 above) or about the Penalty which His justice may inflict for sin or wrong-doing. He is high above all Creation. But He is also Most Gracious. Therefore He may permit special Dignitaries, of honour in His eyes, to plead for sinners, but they will only plead in truth and righteousness:

See verse 38 below.

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا (٣٧)...

none shall have power to argue with Him.

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَّا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرحْمَنُ ...

38. The Day that the Spirit and the angels will stand forth in ranks, none shall speak except any who is permitted by (Allah) Most Gracious,

C5911. The Spirit.- see n. 5677 to 70:4.

Some Commentators understand by "the Spirit" the angel Gabriel as he is charged specially with bringing Messages to human prophets:

see 27:93, n. 3224. (R).

وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (٣٨) ...

and he will say what is right.

C5912. See n. 5910 above.

No one has the right to speak before the Judgment-Seat; but certain great Dignitaries may be given permission to plead for mercy for sinners, and they will only so plead if the mercy is not negatory of Allah's universal justice.

ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الْحَقُّ ...

39. That Day will be the sure Reality:

C5913. Cf. 69:1 and n. 5635.

Judgment is sure to come, and Truth will then be free from all veils. Why should not man, therefore, now in this life of probation, turn back to Allah, and understand and do His Will?

... فَمَن شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ مَآبًا (٣٩)

therefore, whoso will, let him take a (straight) Return to his Lord!

إِنَّا أَنذَرْنَاكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيبًا ...

40. Verily, We have warned you of a Penalty near --

C5914. Is Judgment very near? Yes.

There are three stages of Judgment.

1. Many of our sins and wrong-doings find their penalty in this very life. It may not be an open or striking event, but it corrodes the soul and conscience all the time. Let us therefore turn back to Allah in repentance and ask for forgiveness.
2. Where the Penalty is not actually perceived or is not visible in this life, Death is considered the Lesser Judgment for each individual soul: see n. 5822 to 75:22. Death may come to anyone at any time, and we must all be ready for it.
3. Then there is the final Judgment, when the whole of the present order passes away, and there is a New World. Time as we know it will not exist. Fifty thousand years as we reckon now will be but as a Day: 70:4. According to those standards even this Final Judgment is quite near, and we must prepare for it. For it will be too late then for repentance.

... يَوْمَ يَنظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ ...

the Day when man will see (the Deeds) which his hands have sent forth,

... وَيَقُولُ الْكَافِرُ يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنتُ تُرَابًا (٤٠)

and the Unbeliever will say,

"Woe unto me! Would that I were (mere) dust!"

C5915. The Unbeliever, the Rejecter of Allah, will then find himself in a world of absolute Reality, in which there will be no place for him. He will neither live nor die: 20:74. He will wish that he could be reduced to nothingness, but even that would not be possible.

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الطَّامَّةُ الْكُبْرَى يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنسَانُ مَا سَعَى

But when there comes the greatest catastrophe (i.e. the Day of Recompense, etc.), The Day when man shall remember what he strove for,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Naziat

النَّازِعَات

Introduction and Summary

This is also an early Makkan Surah, of about the same date as the last, and deals with the theme of Judgement from the point of view of Pride and its Fall. The parable of Phara0h occupies a central place in the argument; for he said "I am your Lord Most High". and perished with his followers.

C.259 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Never can Evil escape Allah's order
And law: His angels are ever present
To bring the wicked to their bearings
And they ever strive and press forward to bring
Comfort, succour, and Allah's Mercy to those
Who seek it. Then will come the Day
When the proud shall be humbled, though they
Deny the coming Judgement. What happened
To Pharaoh? He flouted Allah's Message specially
Sent to Him, and arrogantly proclaimed:
"I am your Lord Most High!" He perished
In this life and will answer for his deeds in the next.

****

But can ye not see, O men, the mighty
Works of Allah in the heavens and earth?---
The darksome splendour of the Night with its Stars
And the daylight splendour of the Sun?---
How the earth, with its spacious expanse and its mountains,
Yields moisture and pasture, and feeds and sustains
Men and cattle, through Allah's wise Providence?
Ah! transgress not all bounds and earn not the Fire
Or Punishment, but fear Allah and His Judgement,
And prepare for the Garden of Perpetual Bliss.
Delay not! The Judgement is sure, and it's nigh!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالنَّازِعَاتِ ...

1. By the (angels) who tear out (the souls of the wicked) ...

C5916. The beginning of this Surah may be compared with the beginning of Surah 77.

A translator's task in such passages is extremely difficult. He has to contend, again and again, with verities of a realm beyond man's normal range of experience expressed in elliptical language and he has to Tender them in another language with words of precision intelligible to readers. It is therefore necessary for him to put in part of the Commentary in the Translation in such cases.

The evidence of five things is here invoked in verses 1-5, in order to lead to the conclusion in verse 6 and those following.

Or, if we treat verses 3-5 as three stages of the same thing, there are three things to be considered in five stages.

What are they?

And what is the conclusion?

See the following notes.

غَرْقًا (١) ...

... with violence;

C5917. 'There is much difference of opinion among the Commentators as to the five things or beings mentioned in these verses. I follow the general opinion in my interpretation, which is that angels are referred to as the agency which in their dealings with mankind show clearly Allah's Justice, Power, and Mercy, which again point to the Judgment to come, as a certainty which none can evade.

- The first point, referred to in this verse, is that the souls of the wicked are loath to part with their material body at death, but their will will not count: their souls will be wrenched out into another world. Who will then deny Resurrection and Judgment?

وَالنَّاشِطَاتِ نَشْطًا (٢)

2. By those who gently draw out (the souls of the blessed);

C5918.

- The second point is that in contrast with the wicked, the souls of the blessed will be drawn out gently to their new fife. They will be ready for it. In fact death for them will be a release from the grosser incidents of bodily sense. To them the approach of Judgment will be welcome.

وَالسَّابِحَاتِ سَبْحًا (٣)

3. And by those who glide along (on errands of mercy),

C5919. At all times there are errands of mercy and blessing and errands of justice, which the angels are prompt to execute by order of Allah. There are three features of this, thus giving the third, fourth, and fifth points.

- Their movement is compared to that of gliding or swimming (*sabhan*). In 21:33 this verb is applied to the motion of the celestial bodies: they all "swim along, each in its rounded course".

  Cf. Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice:

  "There's not an orb which thou beholdist,
  But in his motion like an angel sings, Still
  quiring to the young-eyed cherubims-.

- In hurrying on their errands the angels press forth as in a race.

- And thus they promptly execute the orders of their Lord.

فَالسَّابِقَاتِ سَبْقًا (٤)

4. Then press forward as in a race,

فَالْمُدَبِّرَاتِ أَمْرًا (٥)

5. Then arrange to do (the commands of their Lord) --

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ (٦)

6. One Day everything that can be in commotion will be in violent commotion,

C5920. The evidence of the wonderful working of the angels having been invoked in the first five verses, the conclusion is now drawn and stated.

It is certain that one great Day, the whole world as we now see it in our lower life will be in violent revolution. It will be like an earthquake destroying all land-marks. But that will affect only things subject to change: they will suffer violent convulsions as a preliminary to their disappearance.

But Allah and His divine order will not change: His "Face" **abideth** for ever, full of Majesty, Bounty, and Honour (55:27).

تَتْبَعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ (٧)

7. Followed by oft-repeated (commotions):

C5922. All hearts will be in agitation:

those of the blessed ones to see the beginning of the fulfilment of their Lord's Promise;

those of the Rejecters of Allah for fear of His just Judgement.

قُلُوبٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاجِفَةٌ (٨)

8. Hearts that Day will be in agitation;

C5922. All hearts will be in agitation: those of the blessed ones to see the beginning of the fulfilment of their Lord's Promise; those of the Rejecters of Allah for fear of His just Judgement.

أَبْصَارُهَا خَاشِعَةٌ (٩)

9. **Cast down will be** (their owners') eyes.

C5923. Similarly all eyes will be cast down: those of the blessed ones in humble modesty, and those of the Rejecters of Allah, in utter humiliation, sorrow, and shame, for their arrogance and insolence in their probationary life.

يَقُولُونَ أَئِنَّا لَمَرْدُودُونَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ (١٠)

10. They say (now):

"What! shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state?" --

C5924. The Unbelievers say now, in their arrogance, insolence, and mocking defiance: "Surely death here is the end of all things! When we are dead and buried, and our bones are rotten, how can we be restored again?"

They add, "If that were so, then we should indeed be in a turn of dreadful luck! Instead of gaining by the Resurrection, we should be in terrible loss (with our rotten bones)!"

They mean this in biting mockery. But there will indeed be an Account taken, and they will indeed be in a terrible loss, for they will go to perdition!

أَئِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا نَّخِرَةً (١١)

11. "What! --

when we shall have become rotten bones?"

قَالُوا تِلْكَ إِذًا كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ (١٢)

12. They say:

"It would, in that case, be a return with loss!"

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ (١٣)

13. But verily, it will be but a single (compelling) Cry.

C5925. Judgment will be inaugurated with a single compelling Cry.

Cf. 37:19.

See also 36:29 and 36:49, where the single mighty Blast seems to refer to the sinners being cut off in this life and plunged into the other world where they will be further judged, and 36:53, where the final Judgment is referred to.

فَإِذَا هُم بِالسَّاهِرَةِ (١٤)

14. When, behold, they will be in the (full) awakening (to Judgment).

C5926. They will have been more or less dormant before the Great Judgment, as contrasted with the Lesser Judgment (n. 5914 to 78:40, and n. 5822 to 75:22).

When the resurrection comes, they will come fully into the new world, the old heaven and earth having then completely passed away, not only for them but absolutely.

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى (١٥)

15. Has the story of Moses reached thee?

C5927. This is just a reference to the story of Moses told more fully in Surah 20:9-76.

The lessons drawn are:

1. That even to an arrogant blasphemer and rebel against Allah's Law, like Pharaoh, Allah's grace was offered through a major Prophet Moses;
2. that this rejection brought about his signal downfall even in this world; and
3. that his humiliation and punishment will be completed in the Hereafter at Judgment.

إِذْ نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى (١٦)

16. Behold, thy Lord did call to him in the sacred valley to Tuwa --

C5928. Cf. 20:12.

اذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى (١٧)

17. "Go thou to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds.

C5929. Cf. 20:24.

فَقُلْ هَل لَّكَ إِلَى أَن تَزَكَّى (١٨)

18. "And say to him,

'Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified (from sin)? -

وَأَهْدِيَكَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَى (١٩)

19. "'And that I guide thee to thy Lord, **so thou** shouldst fear Him?' "

C5930. Even for such a one as Pharaoh, intoxicated with his own power and greatness, guidance and grace were offered through Moses.

فَأَرَاهُ الْآيَةَ الْكُبْرَى (٢٠)

20. Then did (Moses) show him the Great Sign.

C5931. What was the Great Sign?

Some Commentators understand by it the "White Shinning Hand": see n. 2550 to 20:22-23.

Others think it was the miracle of the rod that became a "snake active in motion": see 20:20,

These were among the Greater Signs: 20:23.

In 17:101 there is a reference to nine Clear Signs given to Moses, and these are specified in detail in n. 1091 to 7:133.

The fact is, there were many Signs given, "openly self-explained," but Pharaoh and his men "were steeped in arrogance,-a people given to sin" (7:133).

The preeminently Great Sign was therefore the fact of Moses being sent to Pharaoh, which subsequently converted the magicians and the more learned Egyptians to the true God (20:70-73), though Pharaoh and his Chiefs resisted and suffered for their sins.

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصَى (٢١)

21. But (Pharaoh) rejected it and disobeyed (guidance);

ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ يَسْعَى (٢٢)

22. Further, he turned his back, striving hard (against Allah).

فَحَشَرَ فَنَادَى (٢٣)

23. Then he collected (his men) and made a proclamation,

فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَى (٢٤)

24. Saying, "I am your Lord, Most High."

فَأَخَذَهُ اللَّهُ نَكَالَ الْآخِرَةِ وَالْأُولَى (٢٥)

25. But Allah did punish him, (and made an) example of him -- in the Hereafter, as in this life.

C5932. See 20:78-79, also 7:135-137.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى (٢٦)

26. Verily in this is an instructive warning for whosoever feareth (Allah):

C5933. Cf. 24:44.

Section 2

أَأَنتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمِ السَّمَاءُ ...

27. What! are ye the more difficult to create of the heaven (above)?

C5934. If man grows arrogant or forgets his accountability to Allah, in his ignorance or thoughtlessness, he is reminded that he is only an insignificant speck in Allah's spacious Creation. All the excellence that man acquires is the gift of Allah. Who has bestowed on him a high Destiny if he fulfils the purpose of his creation: 2:30-39. Then follows a nature passage, pointing to the glory of the heavens and the earth, and how they are both made to subserve the life of man.

... بَنَاهَا (٢٧)

(Allah) hath constructed it:

رَفَعَ سَمْكَهَا فَسَوَّاهَا (٢٨)

28. On high hath He raised its canopy, and He hath given it order and perfection.

C5935. Cf. 2:29.

The mystery of the heavens with their countless stars and the planets obeying the laws of motion, and the sun and moon influencing the temperature and climates of the earth from thousands or millions of miles, illustrate the order and perfection which Allah has given to His Creation.

Can man then remain exempt from his responsibility for his deeds, endowed as he is with a will, or deny the Day of Sorting Out, which is the Day of Judgment?

وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا (٢٩)

29. Its night doth He endow with darkness, and its splendor doth He bring out (with light).

C5936. Its of course refers to the starry heaven.

Both the Night and the Day have each its own beauty and its utility for man, as has been frequently pointed out in the Quran. The night is a period of darkness, but it has also its splendours of light in the moon, or the planets Jupiter or Venus, or stars like Sirius or the Milky Way.

These countless lights of night have their own beauty, and by day there is the splendour of the sun for us, which in Creation as a whole, is just one of countless stars.

وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ...

30. And the earth, moreover;

C5937. Moreover: or, more literally, after that.

See n. 4475 to 41:11.

... ذَٰلِكَ دَحَاهَا (٣٠)

... hath He extended (to a wide expanse):

أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا (٣١)

31. He draweth out therefrom its moisture and its pasture;

C5938. The underground springs and wells of water as well as rivers and glaciers in northern climates are due to the different levels of highlands not lowlands. They spread the moisture evenly as wanted, and give corn, fruits, and vegetables to man, and pastures and feeding grounds to beasts of the fields.

For the wonderful circuit or cycle of water between heaven and earth, see notes 3106 (25:49) and 3111 (25:53).

وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا (٣٢)

32. And the mountains hath He firmly fixed --

C5939. See n. 2038 to 16:15, the "eternal hills" are the main reservoirs for the storage and gradual distribution of water, the very basis of the life of man and beast.

مَتَاعًا ...

33. For use and convenience ...

C5940. This clause I construe to apply to verses 30, 31, and 32 above.

Everything on earth has, by Allah's bountiful providence, been arranged to sub serve the use and convenience of man and the lower life which depends upon him.

The intermediary between Allah's providence and the actual use made of Allah's other gifts is man's own intelligence and initiative, which are also gifts of Allah.

... لَّكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ (٣٣)

... to you and your cattle.

فَإِذَا جَاءتِ الطَّامَّةُ الْكُبْرَى (٣٤)

34. Therefore, when there comes the great, overwhelming (Event) --

C5941. The Judgment, the time for sorting out all things according to their true, intrinsic, and eternal values.

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنسَانُ مَا سَعَى (٣٥)

35. The Day when Man shall remember (all) that he strove for,

C5942. The Judgment will be not only for his acts but for his motives, "all he strove for". In this life he may forget his ill-deeds, but in the new conditions he will not only remember them, but the Fire of Punishment will be plainly visible to him, and not only to him, but it will be "for all to see". This will add to the sinner's humiliation.

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ ...

36. And Hell-Fire shall be placed in full view ....

C5943. Cf. 26:91.

... لِمَن يَرَى (٣٦)

... for (all) to see --

فَأَمَّا مَن طَغَى (٣٧)

37. Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds,

وَآثَرَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (٣٨)

38. And had preferred the life of this world,

C5944. The abiding Punishment will be for those who had willfully and persistently rebelled against Allah, "transgressing all bounds", and had given themselves up to the vanities and lusts of this lower life.

This Punishment will not touch those who had repented and been forgiven, nor those guilty, through human frailty, of minor sing, whose deeds will be weighed in the balance against their good deeds: 101:6-9.

فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى (٣٩)

39. The Abode will be Hell-Fire;

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ ...

40. And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) ...

C5945. The contrast is complete and parallel:

- the persistent rebels against Allah's Law, who preferred the lower life, are to dwell in the Fire of Punishment,
- while those who humbly feared the punishment of sin and believing in their Lord's warnings restrained their lower desires, will dwell in the Garden.

See last note.

... وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى (٤٠)

... and had restrained (their) soul from lower Desires,

فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى (٤١)

41. Their abode will be the Garden.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا (٤٢)

42. They ask thee about the Hour --

'When will be its appointed time?'

C5946. Cf. 7:187 and n. 1159.

Only Allah can reveal it. But were it known, "heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth".

فِيمَ أَنتَ مِن ذِكْرَاهَا (٤٣)

43. Wherein art thou (concerned) with the declaration thereof?

إِلَى رَبِّكَ مُنتَهَاهَا (٤٤)

44. With thy Lord is the Limit fixed therefor.

C5947. Our time has no sort of comparison with the timeless state in the new spiritual World in which the final Judgment will take place.

Nor can its limits-how long it will last-be set except in the Will of Almighty Allah. Lord of Supreme Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness: 11:107-108.

But it is near, in the sense explained in n. 5914 to 78:40.

إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مُنذِرُ مَن يَخْشَاهَا (٤٥)

45. Thou art but a Warner for such as fear it.

C5948. The warning is only effective for those who believe in Allah and in the Final Account. Such men immediately turn in repentance to Allah, and it is to lead such men and help them, that Prophets are sent.

كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَاهَا (٤٦)

46. The Day they see it, (it will be) as if they had tarried but a single evening, or (at most till) the following morn!

C5949. Cf. 10:45, where the expression used is:

> "it will be as if they had tarried but an hour of a day." Here the metaphor used is "a single evening, or, at most, till the following mom".

Death is like sleep, and may be compared to the evening of life. In sleep we do not know how the time passes. When we wake up from the sleep of Death at the Resurrection, we shall not know whether it was the following moment or the following hour after we slept, but we shall feel that it is morning, for we shall be conscious of all that goes on, as one awakened in the morning.

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَن شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ

By no means (should it be so)! For it is indeed a Message of instruction: Therefore let who will, keep it in remembrance.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al 'Abasa

عَبَسَ

Introduction and Summary

This is an early Makkan Surah, and is concerned with an incident which reflects the highest honour on the Prophet's sincerity in the Revelations that were vouchsafed to him even if they seemed to reprove him for some natural and human zeal that led him to a false step in his mission according to his own high standards.

He was once deeply and earnestly engaged in trying to explain the Holy Quran to Pagan Quraysh leaders, when he was

interrupted by a blind man. 'Abd Allah ibn Umm Maktum, one who was also poor, so that no one took any notice of him. He wanted to learn the Quran. The Holy Prophet naturally disliked the interruption and showed impatience. Perhaps the poor man's feelings were hurt. But he whose gentle heart ever sympathized with the poor and the afflicted, which forms part of the sacred scripture of Islam, as described in verse 13-16. And the Prophet always afterwards held the man in high honour.

The incident was only a passing incident, but after explaining the eternal principles of revelation, the Surah recapitulates the Mercies of Allah to man, and the consequences of a good or a wicked life here, as seen in the spiritual world to come, in the Hereafter.

C.260 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Men not blest with the good things of this life
May yet be earnest seekers of Truth
And Purity, and deserve as much attention as those
Who seem to wield some influence, yet who
In their pride are self-sufficient. Allah's Message
Is universal: all have a right
To hear it. Held high in honour, kept
Pure and holy, it should be writ
By none but good and Honourable men.

****

Allah's Grace is showered on man not less
For his inner growth than in his outward
Life. There must be a final Reckoning,
When each soul must stand on its own past Record:
The faces, then, of the Blest will beam
With joy and Light, while the Doers of Iniquity
Will hide in Dust and Shame and Darkness.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ (١)

1. The (Prophet) frowned and turned away.

C5950. See the Introduction to this Surah for the incident to which this refers.

The lesson is that neither spiritual worth nor the prospect of effective spiritual guidance is to be measured by a man's position in life. The poor, or the blind, the halt, or the maimed, may be more susceptible to the teaching of Allah's Word than men who are apparently gifted, but who suffer from arrogance and self-sufficiency.

أَن جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَىٰ (٢)

2. Because there came to him the blind man (interrupting).

وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَّكَّىٰ (٣)

3. But what could tell thee but that perchance he might Grow (in spiritual understanding)? --

أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَىٰ (٤)

4. Or that he might receive admonition, and the teaching might profit him?

C5951. It may be that the poor blind man might, on account of his will to learn, be more likely to grow in his own spiritual development or to profit by any lessons taught to him even in report than a self-sufficient leader. In fact it was so. For the blind man became a true and sincere Muslim and lived to become a governor of Madinah.

أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَىٰ (٥)

5. As to one who regards himself as self-sufficient,

C5952. Such a one would be a Pagan Quraish leader, whom the holy Prophet was anxious to get into his fold, in order that the work of preaching Allah's Message

might be facilitated. But such a Message works first amongst the simple and lowly, the poor and despised folk, and the mighty ones of the earth only come in when the stream rushes in with irresistible force.

فَأَنتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّى (٦)

6. To him dost thou attend;

وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَّكَّى (٧)

7. Though it is no blame to thee if he grow not (in spiritual understanding).

C5953. Allah's Message is for all, but if the great ones arrogantly keep back from it, it is no fault of the preacher, so long as he has proclaimed the Message. He should attend to all, and specially to the humble and lowly.

وَأَمَّا مَن جَاءكَ يَسْعَى (٨)

8. But as to him who came to thee striving earnestly,

C5954. The fear in the blind man's heart may have been two-fold.

- He was humble and God-fearing, not arrogant and self-sufficient;
- being poor and blind, he feared to intrude; yet his earnest desire to learn the Quran made him bold, and he came, perhaps unseasonably, but was yet worthy of encouragement, because of the purity of his heart.

وَهُوَ يَخْشَى (٩)

9. And with fear (in his heart),

فَأَنتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّى (١٠)

10. Of him wast thou unmindful.

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ (١١)

11. By no means (should it be so)! For it is indeed a Message of instruction:

C5955. Allah's Message is a universal Message, from which no one is to be excluded, rich or poor, old or young, great or lowly, learned or ignorant. If anyone had the spiritual craving that needed satisfaction, he was to be given precedence if there was to be any question of precedence at all.

فَمَن شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ (١٢)

12. Therefore let who will, keep it in remembrance.

فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ (١٣)

13. (It is) in Books held (greatly) in honor.

C5956. At the time this Surah was revealed, there were perhaps only about 42 or 45 Surahs in the hands of the Muslims. But it was a sufficient body of Revelation of high spiritual value, to which the description given here could be applied. It was held in the highest honor; its place in the hearts of Muslims was more exalted than that of anything else; as Allah's Word, it was pure and sacred; and those who transcribed it were men who were honorable, just and pious.

The legend that the early Surahs were not carefully written down and preserved in books is a pure invention. The recensions made later in the time of the first and the third Khalifahs were merely to preserve the purity and safeguard the arrangement of the text at a time when the expansion of Islam among non-Arabic-speaking people made such precautions necessary.

مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ (١٤)

14. Exalted (in dignity), kept pure and holy,

بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ (١٥)

15. (Written) by the hands of scribes --

كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (١٦)

16. Honorable and Pious and Just.

قُتِلَ الْإِنسَانُ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ (١٧)

17. Woe to man!
what hath made him reject Allah?

مِنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ (١٨)

18. From what stuff Hath He created him?

مِن نُّطْفَةٍ ...

19. From a sperm-drop:

C5957. Cf. 76:2, and n. 5832.

The origin of man as an animal is lowly indeed. But what further faculties and capacities has not Allah granted to man? Besides his animal body, in which also he shares in all the blessings which Allah has bestowed on the rest of His Creation, man has been granted divine gifts which entitle him to be called the Vicegerent on earth: 2:30.

- He has a will;
- he has spiritual perception;
- he is capable of divine love;
- he can control nature within certain limits, and subject nature's forces to his own use.
- And he has been given the power of judgment, so that he can avoid excess and defect, and follow the middle path. And that path, as well as all that is necessary for his life in its manifold aspects, has been made easy for him.

... خَلَقَهُ فَقَدَّرَهُ (١٩)

He hath created him, and then mouldeth him in due proportions;

ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ (٢٠)

20. Then doth He make His path smooth for him;

ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ (٢١)

21. Then He causeth him to die, and putteth him in his Grave;

C5958. Cf. 20:55.

Death is an inevitable event after the brief life on this earth, but it is also in a sense a blessing, a release from the imperfections of this world, a close of the probationary period, after which will dawn the full Reality. "The Grave" may be understood to be the period between physical death and immortal Life, whatever may be the mode of disposal of the dead body. This intermediate period is the Barzakh or Partition: see n. 2940 to 23:100.

ثُمَّ إِذَا شَاءَ أَنشَرَهُ (٢٢)

22. Then, when it is His will, He will raise him up (again).

كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَا أَمَرَهُ (٢٣)

23. By no means hath he fulfilled what Allah Hath commanded him.

C5959. Though all these blessings and stages have been provided by Allah's Grace for the good of man, yet unregenerate man fails in carrying out the purpose of his creation and life.

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ (٢٤)

24. Then let man look at his Food, (and how We provide it):

C5960. After a reference to man's inner history, there is now a reference to just one item in his daily outer life, his food: and it is shown how the forces of heaven and earth unite by Allah's Command to serve man and his dependants. "A provision for you and your cattle" (verse 32 below). If that is the case with just one item, food, how much more comprehensive is Allah's beneficence when the whole of man's needs are considered!

أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا (٢٥)

25. For that We pour forth water in abundance,

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا (٢٦)

26. And We split the earth in fragments,

C5961. The water comes from the clouds in plentiful abundance; the earth is ploughed, and the soil is broken up in fragments, and yields an abundant harvest of cereals (Corn), trellised fruit (Grapes), and vegetable food (nutritious Plants), as well as fruit that can keep for long periods and serve many uses, like olives and dates.

فَأَنبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا (٢٧)

27. And produce **therein** Corn,

C5962. Therein: i.e., from within the earth or the soil.

وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا (٢٨)

28. And Grapes and nutritious Plants.

وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا (٢٩)

29. And Olives and Dates,

وَحَدَائِقَ ...

30. And enclosed Gardens,

C5963. We not only get field crops such as were mentioned in n. 5961 above, but we have the more highly cultivated garden crops, both in the way of lofty trees, and in the way of carefully tended fruits like the fig; and then we have grass and all kinds of fodder.

... غُلْبًا (٣٠)

dense with lofty trees,

وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا (٣١)

31. And Fruits and Fodder --

مَّتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ (٣٢)

32. For use and convenience to you and your cattle.

C5964. The same verse occurs at 79:33, where n. 5940 explains the wider meaning in that context.

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاخَّةُ (٣٣)

33. At length, when there comes the Deafening Noise --

C5965. Preliminary to the establishment of the Final Judgment.

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ (٣٤)

34. That Day shall a man flee from his own brother.

وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ (٣٥)

35. And from his mother, and his father.

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ (٣٦)

36. And from his wife and his children.

C5966. Even those who were nearest and dearest in this life will not be able or willing to help each other on that awful Day.

On the contrary, if they have to receive a sentence for their sins, they will be anxious to avoid even sharing each other's sorrows or witnessing each other's humiliation; for each will have enough of his own troubles to occupy him.

On the other hand, the Righteous will be united with their righteous families: 52:21; and their faces will be "beaming, laughing, rejoicing" (80:38-39).

لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ (٣٧)

37. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others.

C5967. Cf. 70:10-14.

Nor friend will ask after a friend that Day. On the contrary the sinner will desire to save himself at the expense even of his own family and benefactors.

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ (٣٨)

38. Some Faces that Day will be beaming.

ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ (٣٩)

39. Laughing, rejoicing.

وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ (٤٠)

40. And other faces that Day will be dust-stained;

C5968. The dust on the faces of the sinners will be in contrast to the beaming light on the faces of the righteous; and the blackness in contrast to the "laughing, rejoicing" faces of the righteous.

But the dust also suggests that being Rejecters of Allah, their faces and eyes and faculties were choked in dust, and the blackness suggests that being Doers of Iniquity they had no part or lot in Purity or Light. Another contrast may possibly be deduced: the humble and lowly may be "in the dust" in this life, and the arrogant sinners in sunshine, but the roles will be reversed at Judgment.

تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ (٤١)

41. Blackness will cover them:

أُوْلَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَفَرَةُ الْفَجَرَةُ (٤٢)

42. Such will be the Rejecters of Allah, the Doers of Iniquity.

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ لِمَن شَاءَ مِنكُمْ أَن يَسْتَقِيمَ

Verily, this (the Qur'ân) is no less than a Reminder to (all) the 'Alamîn (mankind and jinns). To whomsoever among you who wills to walk straight,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Takwir

اَلتَّكْوِيْر

Introduction and Summary

This is quite an early Makkan Surah, perhaps the sixth or seventh in chronological order. It opens with a series of highly graphic images portraying the break-up of the world as we know it (verses 1-13) and the enforcement of complete personal responsibility for each soul (verse 14). This is followed by a passage showing how the Quranic Revelation was true, and revealed through the angel Gabriel, and not merely a rhapsody from one possessed. Revelation is given for man's spiritual guidance (verses 14-29). (R).

Comparable with this Surah are Surahs 82 and 84 which may be read with this.

C.261 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

How can the soul's self-conviction be fitly
Expressed, except by types of tremendous
Cataclysms in nature, and still more by tremendous
Searching in the heart of man These want
Deep pondering. When once the spiritual Dawn
Has "breathed away" the Darkness of the Night,
The Vision Glorious clears all doubts,
And brings us face to face with Truth.
The highest Archangel in heaven is sent
By Allah to bring these truths to men
Through their Prophet. Allah's Grace flows freely:
We have but to tune our Will to His---
The ever-loving Righteous God.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ ...

1. When the sun (with its spacious light)

C5969. Verses 1 to 13 are conditional clauses, and the substantive clause is in verse 14.

The time will come when nature's processes as we know them will cease to function, and the soul will only then know by self conviction the results of its actions. With reference to an individual soul, its resurrection is its supreme crisis: the whole world of sense, and even of imagination and reason, melts away, and its whole spiritual scroll is laid bare before it.

كُوِّرَتْ (١) ...

is folded up;

C5970. The conditional clauses are twelve, in two groups of six.

The first six affect the outer or physical life of man; the last six, his inmost spiritual life. Let us take them one by one.

1. The biggest factor affecting us in the external physical World is the light, heat, and perhaps electric or magnetic energy of the sun. The sun is the source of all the light, heat, and energy, and indeed the source and support of all the physical life that we know. It is the biggest factor and yet most remote from us in our solar system. Yet the sources of our inner spiritual life will be greater and more lasting, for they will survive it. The sun as the center of our solar system also stands as a symbol of the present order of things. The physical forces, as defined in Newton's laws of Matter and Attraction, will also break up with the break-up of the sun.

Is folded up: is folded up, or twisted up, like a sheet or garment.

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انكَدَرَتْ (٢)

2. **When the stars fall**, losing their lustre;

C5971.

2. Next after the sun, we can derive faint lights from the innumerable stars in the firmament. For all the ages of which we have any record, these stars have remained fixed. Nothing can be more fixed; yet they can and will fail.

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ (٣)

3. When the mountains vanish (like a mirage);

C5972. Cf. 78:20.

3. On our own earth the mountains the "eternal hills"- seem the most striking examples of stability; yet

they will be swept away like a mirage, as if they had never existed.

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ (٤)

4. When the she-camels, ten months with young, are left untended;

C5973.

4. The type of Arab property, as well as the type of the Arab pet, was the camel, and the most precious camel was the she-camel just about to be delivered of her young. She would in normal times be most sedulously cared for. But when all our landmarks of this life vanish, even she would be left untended. Nothing would then be as it is now.

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ (٥)

5. When the wild beasts are herded together (in human habitations);

C5974.

5. In the present world, the wild animals fear each other, and they all fear man and normally keep away from human habitations. But when this order passes away, there will be scarcely any differentiation between human habitations and the wilds of the forests.

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ (٦)

6. When the oceans boil over with a swell;

C5975. See 52:6 and n. 5041.

6. The oceans, which now keep their bounds, will surge and boil over, and overwhelm all landmarks. At present the waters seem to have reached their fixed and normal levels, but the whole equilibrium will then be disturbed. Such will be the complete wreck of this transitory world, at the approach of the dawn of the permanent Reality.

But these are physical symbols, relating to the outer nature surrounding the physical nature of man. The remaining six. viz.: the 7th to the 12th, describe the

ordering of the new World, from which all present seeming incongruities will be removed.

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ (٧)

7. When the souls are sorted out (Being joined, like with like);

C5976. Cf. 56:7, where the sorting out into three classes is mentioned, viz:

- Those Nearest to Allah,
- the Companions of the Right Hand, and
- the Companions of the Left Hand.

That was a sort of broad general division. The meaning in this passage is wider,

7. Whereas in this world of probation, good is mixed with evil, knowledge with ignorance, power with arrogance, and so on, in the new world of Reality, all true values will be restored, and like will consort with like, for it will be a world of perfect Peace, Harmony, and Justice.

وَإِذَا الْمَوْؤُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ (٨)

8. When the female (infant), Buried alive, is questioned --

بِأَيِّ ذَنبٍ قُتِلَتْ (٩)

9. For what crime she was killed;

C5977.

8. In this world of sin and sorrow, much unjust suffering is caused, and innocent lives sacrificed, without a trace being left, by which offenders can be brought to justice. A striking example before the Quraish was female infanticide:

   Cf. 16:58-59, and n. 2084.

   The crime was committed in the guise of social plausibility in secret collusion, and no question was asked here. But in the world of Justice, full questions will be asked, and the victim herself-dumb here-will be able to give evidence, for she had committed no

crime herself. The proofs will be drawn from the very means used for concealment.

وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ (١٠)

10. When the Scrolls are laid open;

C5978.

9. The Scrolls recording the deeds of men, good or bad, will then be laid open before all.

Cf. 50:17-18, n. 4954; also 82:11-12.

In the present phenomenal world, things may be concealed; but in the world of absolute Reality, every secret is opened out, good or bad. The whole tale of acts, omissions, motives, imponderable spiritual hurt, neglect, or help will be laid bare.

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ (١١)

11. **When the World on High** is unveiled:

C5979. The World on High: literally the Sky, or Heaven as standing for both the Blazing Fire and the Garden, the Home of the Hereafter.

10. Just as when an animal is skinned, its real flesh and blood and inner organs become visible, without any outer coating to hold them together, so the inmost state of every soul will then become plain.

وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِّرَتْ (١٢)

12. **When the Blazing Fire is kindled** to fierce heat;

C5980.

11. Then will burn the Blazing Fire of the Hell, worse than the fiercest fire. (R).

وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ ...

13. And when the Garden...

C5981.

12. Lastly the Garden will come in sight, not yet attained, but visible, or "brought near". For the scales have fallen from the eyes, and the soul knows itself.

... أُزْلِفَتْ (١٣)

is brought near --

C5982.

See 75:22, n. 5822; 78:40, n. 5914; and 79:14, n. 5926.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ (١٤)

14. (Then) shall each soul know what it has put forward.

C5983. This is the conclusion. It is only on such conditions that the soul reaches its full realization. Put forward: cf. "the Deeds which his hands have sent forth" in 78:40.

... فَلَا

15. So verily I call ...

C5984. Cf. 56:75, n. 5258, for the witness that the heavenly bodies bear to the power, beauty, and goodness of Allah, in sending His Revelation.

See n. 5798 to 74:32, for the significance of an adjuration in the Quran.

... أُقْسِمُ ...

... to witness the planets -- ...

C5985. The appeal here is made to three things,

- the Planets,
- the Night, and
- the Dawn.

1. The Planets have a retrograde and a forward motion, and, during occultation, hide or disappear behind the sun or moon, or are otherwise invisible or appear stationary. They behave differently from the millions of stars around them. Yet they are not mere erratic bodies, but obey definite laws, and evidence the power and wisdom of Allah.

بِالْخُنَّسِ (١٥) ...

... that recede,

الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَّسِ (١٦)

16. Go straight, or hide;

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ (١٧)

17. And the Night as it dissipates --

C5986. How the Night gradually declines after its height at midnight!

It seems gradually to steal away, and as Dawn approaches, to merge into Day. So a soul in spiritual darkness gradually awakes to its spiritual Dawn through Revelation.

وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ (١٨)

18. And the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness --

C5987. The slow "breathing out" of the darkness by the Dawn, shows us, by beautiful imagery, that these wonderful operations, of which people in their ignorance are frightened if they have to do with darkness, are really beneficent operations of Allah. They have nothing to do with evil spirits, or witches, or magic. For three questions were actually raised about the holy Prophet's Ministry by the ignorant.

- Did his wonderful works come from himself and not from Allah?
- Was he possessed of an evil spirit? In other words, was he mad? For that was the theory of madness then current.
- Was he a soothsayer, or necromancer, or magician? For he had virtues, powers and eloquence, so extraordinary that they could not understand him.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ (١٩)

19. Verily this is the word of a most honorable Messenger,

C5988. They are told here that all their three theories were foolish.

The Revelation was really from Allah. Their wonder should cease if they observe the daily miracles worked round them in nature. The bringer of Allah's Message was the angel Gabriel, and not an evil spirit.

ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِندَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ (٢٠)

20. Endued with Power, with rank before the Lord of the Throne,

C5989. Not only was the bringer of the Revelation, Gabriel, an honorable Messenger, incapable of deceit, but he had, in the angelic kingdom, rank and authority before Allah's Throne, and he could convey an authoritative divine Message. He was, like the holy Prophet, faithful to his trust; and therefore there could be no question of the Message being delivered in any other way than exactly according to the divine Will and Purpose.

These epithets could apply to the Prophet himself, but in view of verse 23 below, it is best to understand them of Gabriel.

مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ (٢١)

21. With authority there, (and) faithful of his trust.

وَمَا صَاحِبُكُم بِمَجْنُونٍ (٢٢)

22. And (O people!) your companion is not one possessed;

C5990. After describing the credentials of the Archangel Gabriel, the Text now appeals to the people to consider their own "Companion", the Prophet, who had been born among them and had lived with them, and was known to be an honorable, truthful, and trustworthy man.

If Gabriel was the one who brought the Message to him, then there was no question of demoniacal possession. And the Prophet had seen him in his inspired vision "in the clear horizon".

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ (٢٣)

23. And without doubt he saw him in the clear horizon.

C5991. Read along with this the whole passage in 53:1-18 and notes there; specially n.5092, where the two occasions are mentioned when there was a vision of inspiration:

"For truly did he see, of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest" (53:18).

وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ (٢٤)

24. Neither doth he withhold Grudgingly a knowledge of the Unseen.

C5992. Such would be the words of a soothsayer, guarded, ambiguous, and misleading. Here everything was clear, sane, true, and under divine inspiration.

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ (٢٥)

25. Nor is it the word of an evil spirit accursed.

C5993. Such as evil suggestions of envy, spite, greed, selfishness, or other vices. On the contrary the teaching of the Quran is beneficent, pointing to the Right Way, the Way of Allah.

Rajim: literally, driven away with stones. rejected with complete ignominy. Cf. 15:17.

The rite of throwing stones in the valley of Mina at the close of the Makkan Pilgrimage [see n. 217 (6) to 2:197] suggests symbolically that the Pilgrim emphatically, definitely, and finally rejects all Evil.

فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ (٢٦)

26. Then whither go ye?

C5994. It has been shown that this is no word of a mortal, but that it is full of divine wisdom; that its teaching is not that of a madman, but sane to the core and in accordance with human needs; that it freely and clearly directs you to the right Path and forbids you the Path of evil.

Why then hesitate?

Accept the divine Grace; repent of your sins; and come to the higher Life.

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٢٧)

27. Verily this is no less than a Message to (all) the Worlds:

C5995. It is not meant for one class or race; it is universal, and is addressed to all the Worlds. For the meaning of "Worlds", see n. 20 to 1:2.

لِمَن شَاءَ مِنكُمْ أَن يَسْتَقِيمَ (٢٨)

28. (With profit) to whoever among you wills to go straight.

C5996. Cf. 74:55-56.

Allah is the Cherisher of the Worlds, Lord of Grace and Mercy, and His guidance is open to all who have the will to profit by it. But that will must be exercised in conformity with Allah's Will (verse 29). Such conformity is Islam.

Verse 28 points to human free-will and responsibility; verse 29 to its, limitations. Both extremes, viz.,: cast-iron Determinism and an idea of Chaotic Free-will, are condemned.

وَمَا تَشَاؤُونَ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٩)

29. But ye shall not will Except as Allah wills,
The Cherisher of the Worlds.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ

O man! what has seduced thee from thy Lord Most Beneficent? --

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Infitar

الإنفطار

Introduction and Summary

In subject matter this Surah is cognate to the last, thought the best authorities consider it a good deal later in chronology in the early Makkan Period.

Its argument is subject to the threefold interpretation mentioned in n. 5982 to 81:13, *viz*, as referring:

1. to the final Day of Judgement,

2. to the lesser Judgement, on an individual's death, and

3. to the awakening of the Inner Light in the soul at any time, that being considered as Death to the Falsities of this life and a Rebirth to the true spiritual Reality.

C.262 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

How fixed is the order holding together
This material universe above and below us?
Yet it must give way before the vast
Unfathomed Truth in which man will see
His past and his future in true perspective,
To Allah he owes his life and all
Its blessings; will he not see
That the Future depends on Right and Justice?
Righteousness must come to its own,
And so must Discord and Rebellion.
The Day must come when Discord
Must finally cease, and the Peace of Allah
And His Command are all-in-all.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا السَّمَاء انفَطَرَتْ (١)

1. **When** the Sky is **cleft asunder**;

C5997. Cf. the passage 81:1-14 and notes.

For the three parallel interpretations, see the Introduction to the Sura.

There are four conditional clauses here, and the substantive clause is in verse 5.

In S. 81, there were 12 conditional clauses, and the conclusion was, similar, but not expressed in precisely the same terms. See 82:5. n. 6002 below.

The physical world as we see it now will be destroyed before the final Day of Judgment, establishing the true Reality. In the following four clauses we have a reference to the Lesser Judgment, the individual dawn of the true Reality at Death. (R).

C5998. Cf. 73:17, n. 5769.

The beautiful blue sky overhead, which we take for granted in sunshine and storm, will be shattered to pieces before the New World is established. The partition which seems at present to divide things divine from this phenomenal world has to be shattered before each soul knows the reality about itself. (R).

وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انتَثَرَتْ (٢)

2. When the Stars are scattered

C5999. Cf. 81:2, where the word for "stars" (Nujum) is different, and the verb is different. Najm has reference to brightness, and the verb 'losing their lustre" was appropriate there, to show the opposite, **Kaukab** (used here) has more the meaning of a star as fixed in a constellation; and the opposite of a fixed and definite order is "scattered", the verb used here. In fact, throughout this passage, the dominating idea is the disturbance of order and symmetry.

The metaphor behind the scattering of the constellations is that in the present order of things we see many things associated together, e.g., rank with honour, wealth with comfort, etc. In the New World this will be seen to have merely fortuitous. (R).

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ (٣)

3. When the Oceans are suffered to burst forth;

C6000. Cf. 81:6, "when the oceans boil over with a swell".

Here, "are suffered to burst forth" expresses the end of the present order of things. This may be in two ways,

- the barrier which keeps within their respective bounds the various streams of salt and fresh water (55:19, n. 5185) will be removed;
- the Ocean will overwhelm the whole Globe. (R).

وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ (٤)

4. And when the Graves are turned upside down --

C6001. This item is not mentioned in 81:1-14.

Here it is introduced to show that the whole order of things will be so reversed that even Death will not be Death. We think there is tranquility in Death: but there will be no tranquility. Literally, and figuratively, Death will be the beginning of a new Life. What we think to be Death will bring forth Life.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ (٥)

5. (Then) shall each soul know what it hath **sent forward and** (what it hath) **kept back**.

C6002. Sent Forward and kept back: may mean:

the deeds of commission and omission in this life. Or

the Arabic words may also be translated: sent forward and left behind: i.e., the spiritual possibilities which it sent forward for its other life, and the physical things on which it prided itself in this life, but which it had to leave behind in this life. Or

else, the things it put first and the things it put last in importance may change places in the new world of Reality. "The first shall be last and the last shall be first".

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ (٦)

6. O man! what has seduced thee from thy Lord Most Beneficent? --

الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ ...

7. Him Who created thee. Fashioned thee in due proportion,

C6003. Cf. Cf. 15:29.

Allah not only created man, but fashioned him in due proportions, giving him extraordinary capacities, and the means wherewith he can fulfil his high destiny.

فَعَدَلَكَ (٧) ...

and gave thee a just bias;

C6004. See n. 834 to 6:1.

Having given a limited free-will, He gave us a just bias through our reason and our spiritual faculties. If we err, it is our will that is at fault.

فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَّا شَاء رَكَّبَكَ (٨)

8. In whatever Form He wills, does He put thee together.

C6005. By "Form" **(Surah)** here I understand the general shape of things in which any given personality is placed, including his physical and social environments, his gifts of mind and spirit, and all that goes to make up his outer and inner life.

The Grace of Allah is shown in all these things, for His Will is formed from perfect knowledge wisdom, and goodness.

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالدِّينِ (٩)

9. Nay! but ye do Reject Right and Judgment!

C6006. The goodness and mercies of Allah, and His constant watchful care of all His creatures should make men grateful, instead of which they turn away from the Right and deny the Day of Sorting Out, the Day when every action performed here will find its fulfilment in just reward or punishment.

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

10. But verily over you (are appointed angels) ...

C6007. Besides the faculties given to man to guide him, and the Form and Personality through which he can rise by stages to the Presence of Allah, there are spiritual agencies around him to help and protect him, and to note down his Record, so that perfect justice may be done to him at the end.

For these Guardian Angels, see 50:17-18, and n. 4954.

لَحَافِظِينَ (١٠) ...

... to protect you --

كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ (١١)

11. Kind and honorable, writing down (your deeds)

يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (١٢)

12. They know (and understand) all that ye do.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (١٣)

13. As for the Righteous, they will be in Bliss;

وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ (١٤)

14. And the Wicked -- they will be in the Fire,

يَصْلَوْنَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (١٥)

15. **Which they will enter** on the Day of Judgment.

C6008. I understand this relative clause to govern "the Fire", i.e., the Punishment. It will be postponed as long as possible, to give the Sinner every chance of repentance and amendment. But once the period of probation is past, it will be irrevocable. There will be no going back from it. By inference, the Righteous may individually reach some stage of Bliss at once, possibly in this life, possibly after death, though the Final Judgment will be the general and complete cessation of this fleeting world and the creation of the world of Eternity.

وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ (١٦)

16. And they will not be Able to keep away therefrom.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٧)

17. And what will explain to thee what the Day of Judgment is?

ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٨)

18. Again, what will explain to thee what the Day of Judgment is?

C6009. We can speak of Rewards and Punishments, the Fruits of Actions, the Resurrection and the Tribunal, the Restoration of True Values, the Elimination of all Wrong, and a hundred other phrases. They might serve to introduce our minds vaguely to a new World, of which they cannot possibly form any adequate conception under present conditions. The question is repeated in verses 17-18 to emphasize this difficulty, and a simple answer is suggested, as explained in the next note.

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا ...

19. (It will be) the Day when no soul shall have power (to do) aught for another:

C6010. The answer is suggested by a negative proposition:

'No soul shall have power to do aught for another'.

This is full of meaning. Personal responsibility will be fully enforced.

In this world we all depend on one another proximately, though our ultimate dependence is always on Allah, now and for ever. But here a father helps a son forward; husband and wife influence each other's destinies; human laws and institutions may hold large masses of mankind under their grip; falsehood and evil may seem to flourish for a time, because a certain amount of limited free-will has been granted to man. This period will be all over then.

The good and the pure will have been separated from the evil and the rebellious; the latter will have been rendered inert, and the former will have been so perfected that their wills will be in complete consonance with Allah's Universal Will. The Command, thence forward, will be wholly with Allah.

... وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ (١٩)

for the Command, that Day, will be (wholly) with Allah.



وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ

And none can deny it but the Transgressor beyond bounds, the Sinner!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Mutaffifin

الْمُطَفِّفِينَ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is close in time to the last one and the next one.

It condemn all fraud-in daily dealings, as well as and especially in matters of religious and higher spiritual Life.

C.263 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Shun Fraud in all things: in little
Things of daily life, but specially
In those subtler forms of higher life,

Which will be exposed to view at Judgement,
However hidden they may be
In this life. Give everyone his due
For the Record of ill deeds and good
Is fully kept, and the stains of sin
Corrupt the soul. Reject not the Real
Now, nor mock: for the time will come
When the True will come to its own, and then
The mighty arrogant will be abased!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ (١)

1. Woe to those that deal in fraud --

C6011. "**Fraud**" must here be taken in a widely general sense. It covers giving short measure or short weight, but it covers much more than that.

The next two verses make it clear that it is the spirit of injustice that is condemned, giving too little and asking too much.

This may be shown in commercial dealings, where a man exacts a higher standard in his own favour than he is willing to concede as against him.

In domestic or social matters an individual or group may ask for honour, or respect, or services which he or they are not willing to give on their side in similar circumstances. It is worse than one-sided selfishness: for it is double injustice. But it is worst of all in religion or spiritual life: with what face can a man ask for Mercy or Love from Allah when he is unwilling to give it to his fellow-men?

In one aspect this is a statement of the Golden Rule.

'Do as you would be done by'.

But it is more completely expressed. You must give in full what it due from you, whether you expect or wish to receive full consideration from the other side or not.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا اكْتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ (٢)

2. Those who, when they have to receive by measure, from men, exact full measure.

وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَو وَّزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ (٣)

3. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due.

أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُم مَّبْعُوثُونَ (٤)

4. Do they not think that they will be called to account? --

C6012. Legal and social sanctions against Fraud depend for their efficacy on whether there is a chance of being found out. Moral and religious sanctions are of a different kind.

'Do you wish to degrade your own nature?'

'Do you not consider that there is a Day of Account before a Judge Who knows all, and Who safeguards all interests, for He is the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds? Whether other people know anything about your wrong or not, you are guilty before Allah'.

لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (٥)

5. On a Mighty Day,

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦)

6. A Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ (٧)

7. Nay! Surely the Record of the Wicked is (preserved) in **Sijjin**,

C6013. This is a word from the same root as ***Sijn***, a Prison. It rhymes with and is contrasted with ***Illiyin*** in verse 18 below. It is therefore understood by many Commentators to be a place, a Prison or a Dungeon in

which the Wicked are confined pending their appearance before the Judgment-Seat.

The mention of the Inscribed Register in verse 9 below may imply that ***Sijjin*** is the name of the Register of Black Deeds, though verse 9 may be elliptical and may only describe the place by the significance of its contents.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ (٨)

8. And what will explain to thee what **Sijjin** is?

كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ (٩)

9. (There is) a Register (fully) inscribed.

C6014. If we take ***Sijjin*** to be the Register itself, and not the place where it is kept, the Register itself is a sort of Prison for those who do wrong.

It is **inscribed** fully: i.e., no one is omitted who ought to be there, and for every entry there is a complete record, so that there is no escape for the sinner. (R).

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ (١٠)

10. Woe, that Day, to those that deny --

الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ (١١)

11. Those that deny the Day of Judgment.

C6015. The fact of Personal Responsibility for each soul is so undoubted that people who deny it are to be pitied, and will indeed be in a most pitiable condition on the Day of Reckoning, and none but the most abandoned sinner can deny it, and he only denies it by playing with Falsehoods.

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ (١٢)

12. And none can deny it but the Transgressor beyond bounds, the Sinner!

إِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣)

13. When Our Signs are rehearsed to him, he says,
"Tales of the Ancients!"

C6016. Cf. 6:25; 68:15; etc.

They scorn Truth and pretend that it is Falsehood.

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٤)

14. By no means! but on their hearts is the stain of the (ill) which they do!

C6017. The heart of man, as created by Allah, is pure and unsullied.

Every time that a man does an ill deed, it marks a stain or rust on his heart. But on repentance and forgiveness, such stain is washed off.

If there is no repentance and forgiveness, the stains deepen and spread more and more, until the heart is scaled (2:7), and eventually the man dies a spiritual death.

It is such stains that stand in the way of his perceiving Truths which are obvious to others. That is why he mocks at Truth and hugs Falsehood to his bosom.

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَن رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوبُونَ (١٥)

15. Verily, from (the Light of) their Lord, that Day, will they be veiled.

C6018. The stain of evil deeds on their hearts sullies the mirror of their hearts, so that it does not receive the light. At Judgment the true Light, the Glory of the Lord, the joy of the Righteous, will be hidden by veils from the eyes of the Sinful. Instead, the Fire of Punishment will be to them the only reality which they will perceive.

ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ (١٦)

16. Further, they will enter the Fire of Hell.

ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنتُم بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ (١٧)

17. Further, it will be said to them:
"This is the (reality) which ye rejected as false!"

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ (١٨)

18. Nay, verily the Record of the Righteous is (preserved) in **'Illiyin**.

C6019. 'Illiyin: the oblique form of the nominative ***Illiyun***, which occurs in the next verse.

It is in contrast to the **Sijjin** which occurs in verse 7 above, where see n. 6213.

Literally, it means the 'High Places'.

Applying the reasoning parallel to that which we applied to **Sijjin**, we may interpret it as the Place where is kept the Register of the Righteous.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عِلِّيُّونَ (١٩)

19. And what will explain to thee what **'Illiyin** is?

كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ (٢٠)

20. (There is) a Register (fully) inscribed.

C6020. This repeats verse 9 above, where see n. 6014. But the Register is of the opposite kind, that of the Righteous. It contains every detail of the Righteous. (R).

يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢١)

21. To which bear witness those Nearest (to Allah).

C6021. See 56:11, n. 5227; also n. 5223.

Those Nearest to Allah will be witnesses to this Righteous Record; or as it may also be rendered, they will be present at the Record, and watch this Record.

Metaphorically, the highest spiritual dignitaries are always helping and assisting at the piling up of the good record of every soul that strives for good, however humble in rank that soul may be.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (٢٢)

22. Truly the Righteous will be in Bliss:

عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنظُرُونَ (٢٣)

23. On Thrones (of Dignity) will they command a sight (of all things):

C6022. Cf. 36:56.

تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ (٢٤)

24. Thou wilt recognize in their Faces the beaming brightness of Bliss.

C6023. Cf. 75:22, and 76:11.

يُسْقَوْنَ مِن رَّحِيقٍ مَّخْتُومٍ (٢٥)

25. Their thirst will be slaked with Pure Wine sealed:

C6024. The Wine will be of the utmost purity and flavour, so precious that it will be protected with a **seal**, and the seal itself will be of the costly material of musk, which is most highly esteemed in the East for its perfume.

Perhaps a better interpretation of the **"seal"** is to take it as implying the final effect of the drink: just as a seal close a document, so the seal of the drink will be the final effect of the delicious perfume and flavour of musk, heightening the enjoyment and helping in the digestion. (R).

خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (٢٦)

26. The seal thereof will be Musk:

and for this let those aspire, who have aspirations:

C6025. If you understand true and lasting values, this is the kind of pure Bliss to aspire, for, and not the fleeting enjoyments of this world, which always leave a sting behind.

وَمِزَاجُهُ مِن تَسْنِيمٍ (٢٧)

27. With it will be (given) a mixture of **Tasnim**:

C6026. Tasnim literally indicates height, fullness, opulence.

Here it is the name of a heavenly Fountain, whose drink is superior to that of the Purest Wine.

It is the nectar drunk by Those Nearest to Allah (n. 5227 to 56:11), but a flavour of it will be given to all.

See n. 5835 to 76:5 (Kafur fountain), and n. 5849 to 76:17-18 (Salsabil). (R).

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (٢٨)

28. A spring, from (the waters) whereof drink those Nearest to Allah.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ (٢٩)

29. Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed,

وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَزُونَ (٣٠)

30. And whenever they passed by them, used to wink at each other (in mockery);

وَإِذَا انقَلَبُوا إِلَى أَهْلِهِمُ انقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ (٣١)

31. And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting;

وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُّونَ (٣٢)

32. And whenever they saw them, they would say,

"Behold! these are the people truly astray!"

C6027. The wicked laugh at the righteous in this world in many ways:

- They inwardly laugh at their Faith, because they feel themselves so superior.
- In public places, when the righteous pass, they wink at each other and insult them.
- In their own houses they run them down.
- Whenever and wherever they see them, they reproach them with being fools who have lost their way, when the boot is really on the other leg.

In the Hereafter all these tricks and falsehoods will be shown for what they are, and the tables will be reversed.

وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ حَافِظِينَ (٣٣)

33. But they had not been sent as Keepers over them!

C6028. But the wicked critics of the Righteous have no call in any case to sit in judgment over them. Who set them as Keepers or guardians over the Righteous? Let them look to their own condition and future first.

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ (٣٤)

34. But on this Day the Believers will laugh at the Unbelievers.

C6029. The tables will then be reversed, and he laughs best who laughs last.

عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنظُرُونَ (٣٥)

35. On Thrones (of Dignity) they will command (a sight) (of all things).

C6030. A repetition of verse 23 above, but with a different shade of meaning.

The Righteous on their raised couches will be able to see all the true values restored in their own favour: but they will also see something else: they will also see the arrogant braggarts brought low, who brought about their own downfall by their own actions.

هَلْ ثُوِّبَ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)

36. Will not the Unbelievers have been paid back for what they did?



يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ

O man! Verily, you are returning towards your Lord with your deeds and actions (good or bad), a sure returning, so you will meet (i.e. the results of your deeds which you did).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Inshiqaq

الإنشقاق

Introduction and Summary

Chronologically this Surah is closely connected with the last one. In subject matter it resembles more S. 82 and S. 81, with which it may be compared.

The Surah, which opens with a mention of some cataclysmic events, shows that the present phenomenal order will not last, and Allah's full Judgement will certainly be established: man should therefore strive for the World of Eternity and the true Values. (R).

C.264 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

All mysteries, fair or shrouded in gloom,
Will vanish when the full Reality
Stands revealed. If the life is but Painful
Toil, there's the Hope of Meeting with the Lord!
That will be Bliss indeed for the Righteous,
But woe to the arrogant dealers in sin!
Like the sunset Glow or the shades of Night,
Or the Moon's ever-changing light, man's life
Never rests here below, but travels ever onwards
Stage by stage. Grasp then Allah's Message
And reach the Heights, to reap a Reward
That will never fail through all eternity!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا السَّمَاء انشَقَّتْ (١)

1. When the Sky is rent asunder,

C6031. The passing away of this world of sense to make way for a new World of Reality is here indicated by two Facts, which are themselves signs for a complete revolution in our whole knowledge and experience.

At the beginning of S. 82 and S. 81, other Signs were used, to lead up to the arguments there advanced. Here the two Signs are:

1. the Sky being rent asunder and giving up its secrets, and
2. the Earth being flattened out from the globe it is, and giving up its secrets.

See the following notes.

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (٢)

2. **And hearkens to** (the Command of) its Lord -- and it must needs (do so) --

C6032. We may think that the heavens we see above us-high and sacred, seemingly vast and limitless, eternal and timeless-are not created matter. But they are. And they remain just so long as Allah wills it so, and not a moment longer.

As soon as His Command issues for their dissolution, they will obey and vanish, and all their mystery will be emptied out. And it must necessarily be so; their very nature as created beings requires that they must hearken to the voice of their Creator, even to the extent of their own extinction.

وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ (٣)

3. And when the Earth is flattened out,

C6033. The Earth is a globe, enclosing within it many secrets and mysteries-gold and diamonds in its mines, heat and magnetic forces in its entrails, and the bodies of countless generations of men buried within its soil. At its dissolution all these contents will be disgorged: it will lose its shape as a globe, and cease to exist.

وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (٤)

4. And casts forth what is within it and becomes (clean) empty,

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا...

5. **And hearkens to** (the Command of) its Lord --

C6034. See n. 6032.

We think the earth so solid and real. All our perishable things dissolve into the earth. But the earth itself will dissolve into a truer Reality.

... وَحُقَّتْ (٥)

and it must needs (do so) -- (then will come Home the full Reality).

C6035. The substantive clause, to follow the two conditional clauses preceding, may be filled up from the suggestion contained in 82. 5.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَى رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ (٦)

6. O thou man! verily thou art ever toiling on towards the Lord -- painfully toiling -- but thou shalt meet Him.

C6036. This life is ever full of toil and misery, if looked at as empty of the Eternal Hope which Revelation gives us. Hence the literature of pessimism in poetry and philosophy which thinking minds have poured forth in all ages, when that Hope was obscured to them.

"Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

"To each his suffering; all are men condemned alike to groan!"

It is the noblest men that have to "scorn delights and live laborious days" in this life.

The good suffer on account of their very goodness: the evil on account of their Evil. But the balance will be set right in the end. Those that wept shall be made to rejoice, and those that went about thoughtlessly rejoicing, shall be made to weep for their folly. They will all go to their account with Allah and meet Him before His Throne of Judgment.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ (٧)

7. Then he who is given his Record in his Right hand,

C6037. Right Hand. Cf. 17:71.

Then will be the fortunate ones, who spent their lives in goodness and truth: for them the account will be made easy; for even after the balancing, they will receive more than their merits deserve, on account of the infinite grace, and mercy of Allah.

فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا (٨)

8. Soon will his account be taken by an easy reckoning,

وَيَنقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا (٩)

9. And he will turn to **his people**, rejoicing!

C6038. His people, should be understood in a large sense, including all righteous persons of his category, including of course all those nearest and dearest to him), who are spiritually of his family, whether before him or after him in time.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ (١٠)

10. But he who is given his Record behind his back --

C6039. In 69:25, the wicked are given the Record in their left hand. But their hands will not be free. Sin will tie their hands behind their back: and thus they can only receive their Records in their left hand, behind their back.

فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُو ثُبُورًا (١١)

11. Soon will he cry for Perdition,

C6040. The wicked will cry for death and annihilation: but they will neither live nor die: 20:74.

وَيَصْلَىٰ سَعِيرًا (١٢)

12. And he will enter a Blazing Fire.

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا (١٣)

13. Truly, did he go about among his people, rejoicing!

C6041. The tables are now turned. His self-complacence and self-conceit in his lower life will now give place to weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Cf. n. 6036 above.

إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَن لَّن يَحُورَ (١٤)

14. Truly, did he think that he would not have to return (to Us)!

C6042. Most of the Evil in this world is due to the false idea that man is irresponsible, or to a mad and thoughtless indulgence of self.

Man is not irresponsible. He is responsible for every deed, word, and thought of his, to his Maker, to Whom he has to return, to give an account of himself. To remember this and act accordingly is to achieve salvation; to forget or flout that responsibility is to get into the Fire of self-deception and misery.

بَلَىٰ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا (١٥)

15. Nay, nay! for his Lord was (ever) watchful of him!

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ (١٦)

16. **So I do call** to witness the **ruddy glow of Sunset;**

C6043. The same form of adjuration as in 69:37.

The substantive statement is in verse 19 below: 'Ye shall surely travel from stage to stage-. Nothing in this life is fixed, or will last. Three things are mentioned which on the one hand have remained from age to age for as far back as the memory of man can go, and yet each of them is but a short phase, gone as it were in the twinkling of an eye. See the following notes. So our life here is but a fleeting show. Its completion is to be looked for elsewhere.

C6044.

1. The sun seems such a great reality that people worshipped him as a divinity. The beautiful glow it leaves when it sets is but momentary: it changes every moment and vanishes with the twilight.

وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ (١٧)

17. The Night and its Homing;

C6045.

2. The Night is a phenomenon you see during almost half every twenty-four hours in ordinary latitudes. At nightfall, all the wandering flocks and herds come home. The men scattered abroad for their livelihood return home to rest and sleep. The Night collects

them in their homes, and yet this phase of Homing lasts but a little while. Presently all is silent and still. So will it be with our souls when this life is ended with our death. We shall be collected in a newer and larger Homing.

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (١٨)

18. And the Moon in her Fullness;

C6046.

3. The astronomical Full Moon does not last a moment. The moment the moon is full, she begins to decline, and the moment she is in her "inter-lunar swoon", she begins her career anew as a growing New Moon.

   So is man's life here below. It is not fixed or permanent, either in its physical phases, or even more strikingly, in its finer phases, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual.

لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ (١٩)

19. Ye shall surely travel from stage to stage.

C6047. Man travels and ascends stage by stage.

In 67:3 the same word in the form ***tibaqan*** was used of the heavens, as if they were in layers one above another.

Man's spiritual life may similarly be compared to an ascent from one heaven to another.

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٠)

20. What then is the matter with them, that they believe not? --

C6048. Considering man's high destiny, and the fact that this life is but a stage or a sojourn for him, it might be expected that he would eagerly embrace every opportunity of welcoming Allah's Revelation and ascending by Faith to heights of spiritual wisdom. There is something wrong with his will if he does not do so.

Notice the transition from the second person in verse 19, where there is a direct appeal to Allah's votaries, to the

third person in verses 20-21, where men who are rebels against Allah's Kingdom are spoken of as if they were aliens.

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ (٢١)

21. And when the Quran is read to them, they fall not prostrate.

C6049. Prostrate. out of respect and humble gratitude to Allah.

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُكَذِّبُونَ (٢٢)

22. But on the contrary the Unbelievers reject (it).

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ (٢٣)

23. But Allah has full Knowledge of what they secrete (in their breasts).

فَبَشِّرْهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٤)

24. So announce to them a Penalty Grievous,

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (٢٥)

25. Except to those who believe and work righteous deeds: for them is a Reward that will never fail.

C6050. Cf. 41:8.

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ

The Day that (all) things secret will be tested. (Man) will have no power, and no helper.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Buruj

البُرُوج

Introduction and Summary

This is one of the earlier Makkan Surahs, chronologically cognate with S.91. The subject matter is the persecution of Allah's votaries. Allah watches over His own, and will deal with the enemies of Truth as He dealt with them in the past.

C.265 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Woe to those who prosecute Truth!

They are being watched by mighty Eyes;

They will have no answer when the Judgement comes;

And a clear Record will witness against them.
Are they cruel to men because of their Faith?
The Fire they use will be turned against them.
For Allah is strong, and will subdue
The mightiest foes. Be warned, and learn
From His gracious Message, preserved through all Time!



وَالسَّمَاءِ ...

1. By the Sky, (displaying) ...

C6051. Here is an appeal to three Signs in verses 1-3, and the substantive proposition is in verses 4-8, a denunciation of wicked persecutors of the votaries of Allah, persecutors who burnt righteous men for their Faith. The three Signs are:

1. the Glorious Sky, with the broad belt of the Constellations marking the twelve Signs of the Zodiac;
2. the Day of Judgment, when all evil will be punished; and
3. certain Persons that will be witnesses, and certain Persons or things that will be the subjects of the witness.

See the notes following.

ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ (١) ...

...the Zodiacal Signs;

C6052. See n. 1950 to 15:16.

The Stars of the Zodiac as well as of other Constellations are like the eyes of the Night. It may be that crimes are committed in the darkness of the night. But countless

eyes are watching all the time, and every author of evil will be brought to book.

وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ (٢)

2. By the promised Day (of Judgment);

C6053. The Day of Judgment, when the Sinner will have to give an account of every deed, open or hidden, is not merely a matter of speculation. It is definitely promised in revelation, and will inevitably come to pass. Woe then to the Sinners for their crimes.

وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ (٣)

3. By one that witnesses, and the subject of the witness --

C6054. The literal meaning is clear, but its metaphorical application has been explained in a variety of ways by different Commentators. The words are fairly comprehensive, and should, I think, be understood in connection with Judgment. There the Witnesses may be:

Allah Himself (3:81, and 10:61);

the Prophets (3:81);

the Recording Angels (50:21);

the Sinner's own misused limbs (24:24);

his record of deeds (17:14); or

the Sinner himself (17:14).

The subject of the witness may be the deed or crime, or the Sinner against whom the testimony cries out.

The appeal to these things means that the Sinner cannot possibly escape the consequences of his crime. He should repent, seek Allah's Mercy, and amend his life.

قُتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ (٤)

4. Woe to the makers of the pit (of Fire),

C6055. Who were the makers of the pit of fire in which they burn people for their Faith?

The words are perfectly general, and we need not search for particular names, except by way of illustration.

In ancient history, and in Medieval Europe, many lives were sacrificed at the stake because the victims did not conform to the established religion.

In Arab tradition there is the story of Abraham: Nimrud tries to burn him to death, but on account of Abraham's Faith, the fire became "a means of safety for Abraham": 21:69, and n. 2725.

Another case cited is that of Dhu Nuwas, the last Himyarite King of Yemen, by religion a Jew, who persecuted the Christians of Najran and is said to have burnt them to death. He seems to have lived in the latter half of the sixth Christian century, in the generation immediately preceding the Prophet's birth in 570 A.D.

While the words are perfectly general, a reference is suggested to the persecution to which the early Muslims were subjected by the Pagan Quraish. Among other cruelties, they were stripped, and their skins were exposed to the burning rays of the Arabian summer sun. (R).

النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُودِ (٥)

5. Fire supplied (abundantly) with Fuel:

إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ (٦)

6. Behold! **they sat** over against the (fire).

C6056. The persecutors sat calmly to gloat over the agonies of their victims in the well-fed fire.

وَهُمْ عَلَى مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ (٧)

7. And they witnessed (all) that they were doing against the Believers.

وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَن يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ (٨)

8. And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah,

Exalted in Power, worthy of all Praise! --

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (٩)

9. Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! and Allah is Witness to all things.

C6057. It is suggested that the persecutors will richly deserve to be punished in the Fire of Hell. That Punishment will be far more real and lasting than the undeserved cruelty which they inflicted on men for their Faith in the One True God.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ ...

10. Those who persecute (or draw into temptation) the Believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the Penalty of Hell:

... وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ (١٠)

they will have the Penalty of the Burning Fire.

C6058. The "penaltyof the Burning Fire" has been mentioned here in addition to the "Penalty of Hell".

This assumes a special significance in the background of the cruel burning of the Faithful by the "makers of the pit". These criminals would be duly retributed by being subjected to a similar kind of suffering that they had caused their innocent victims. [Eds.}

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي ...

11. For those who believe and do righteous deeds, will be Gardens,

C6059. Cf. 5:119, 972 and 22:23.

... مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ (١١)

Beneath which Rivers flow: that is the great Salvation, (the fulfillment of all desires).

C6060. Cf. 5:119, n. 833.

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ (١٢)

12. Truly strong is the Grip (and Power) of thy Lord.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ يُبْدِئُ ...

13. It is He Who creates from the very beginning,

C6061. For the various words for "Creation" and the ideas implied in them, see n. 120 to 2:117.

... وَيُعِيدُ (١٣)

and He can restore (life).

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ (١٤)

14. And He is the Oft-Forgiving, Full of loving-kindness,

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ (١٥)

15. Lord of the Throne of Glory,

... فَعَّالٌ

16. Doer (without let).

C6062. Allah's Will is itself the Word and the Deed. There is no interval between them. He does not change His mind. No circumstances whatever can come between His Will and the execution thereof. Such are His Power and His Glory.

Compare it with that of men, described in the next two verses.

... لِّمَا يُرِيدُ (١٦)

of all that He intends.

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ (١٧)

17. Has the story reached thee, of the Forces --

C6063. In contrast to the real, all-embracing, and eternal power of Allah, what are the forces of man at their best?

Two examples are mentioned.

1. Pharaoh was a proud monarch of a powerful kingdom, with resources and organisation, material, moral, and intellectual, as good as any in the world. When he pitted himself against Allah's Prophet, he and his forces were destroyed, See 79;15-26.
2. The Thamud were great builders, and had a high standard of material civilization. But they defied the law of Allah and perished. See 7:73-79, and n. 1043.

فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ (١٨)

18. Of Pharaoh and the Thamud?

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ (١٩)

19. And yet the Unbelievers (persist) in rejecting (the Truth)!

C6064. In spite of the great examples of the past, by which human might and skill were shown to have availed nothing when the law of Allah was broken, the unbelievers persist (in all ages) in defying that law. But Allah will know how to deal with them.

وَاللَّهُ مِن وَرَائِهِم مُّحِيطٌ (٢٠)

20. But Allah doth encompass them from behind!

C6065. Allah encompasses every thing. But the wicked will find themselves defeated not only in conditions that they foresee, but from all sorts of unexpected directions, perhaps from behind them, i.e., from the very people or circumstances which in their blindness they despised or thought of as helping them.

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ (٢١)

21. Nay, this is a Glorious Quran,

فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ (٢٢)

22. (Inscribed) in a Tablet Preserved!

C6066. "Inscribed in a Tablet Preserved", i.e. Allah's Message is not ephemeral. It is eternal.

The "Tablet" is "preserved" or guarded from corruption: 15:9: for Allah's Message must endure for ever.

That Message is the "Mother of the book": see n. 347 to 3:7. (R).



يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ

The Day that (all) things secret will be tested. (Man) will have no power, and no helper.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Tariq

الطَّارِق

Introduction and Summary

This Surah also belongs to the early Makkan period, perhaps not far removed from the last Surah.

Its subject matter is the protection afforded to every soul in the darkest period of its spiritual history. The physical nature of man may be insignificant, but the soul given to him by Allah must win a glorious Future in the end.

C.266 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Through the darkest night comes the penetrating light
Of a glorious Star. Such is the power
Of Revelation: it projects and guides the erring.
For what is man? But a creature of flesh
And bones! But Allah by His Power doth raise
Man's state to a Life Beyond!---when lo!
All things hidden will be made plain.
Man's help will then be but the Word
Of Allah, which none can thwart. So wait
With gentle patience---for His Decision.



وَالسَّمَاءِ ...

1. By the Sky...

C6067. The appeal here is to single Sign, viz.: the Sky with its Night. Visitant; and the substantive proposition is in verse 4: "There is no soul but has a protector over it".

In the last Sura we considered the persecution of Allah's votaries, and how Allah protects them. Here the same theme is presented in another aspect. In the darkest sky shines out most brilliantly the light of the most brilliant star. So in the night of spiritual darkness- whether through ignorance or distress shines the glorious star of Allah's revelation. By the same token the man of Faith and Truth has nothing to fear. Allah will protect His own.

وَالطَّارِقِ (١) ...

...and the Night-Visitant (therein) --

C6068. This is explained in verse 3 below. The "Star of piercing brightness" is understood by some to be the

Morning Star, by others to be the planet Saturn, by others again to be Sirius, or the Pleiades or shooting stars.

I think it is best to take the "Star" in the collective or generic sense, for stars shine on every night in the year, and their piercing brightness is most noticeable on the darkest night.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ (٢)

2. And what will explain to thee what the Night-Visitant is? --

النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ (٣)

3. (It is) the Star of piercing brightness --

إِن كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ (٤)

4. There is no soul but has a protector over it.

C6069. If man has a true spiritual understanding, he has nothing to be afraid of. He is protected by Allah in many ways that he does not even know. He may be an insignificant creature as a mere animal, but his soul raises him to a dignity above other creation. And all sorts of divine forces guard and protect him.

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ (٥)

5. Now let man but think from what he is created!

خُلِقَ مِن مَّاء دَافِقٍ (٦)

6. He is created from a drop emitted --

C6070. See n. 5832 to 76:2.

See also last note.

يَخْرُجُ مِن بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ (٧)

7. Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs:

C6071. A man's seed is the quintessence of his body. It proceeds from his loins, i.e., from his back between the hip-bones and his ribs. His back-bone is the source and symbol of his strength and personality. In the spinal cord and in the brain is the directive energy of the central nervous system, and this directs all action, organic and psychic. The spinal cord is continuous with the Medulla Oblongata in the brain.

إِنَّهُ عَلَى رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ (٨)

8. Surely (Allah) is able to bring him back (to life)!

C6072. The Creator who can mingle the forces of psychic and physical muscular action in the creation of man, as explained in the last note, can surely give a new life after physical death here, and restore man's personality in the new world that will open out in the Hereafter.

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ (٩)

9. The Day that (all) things secret will be tested.

فَمَا لَهُ مِن قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ (١٠)

10. (Man) will have no power, and no helper.

C6073. In that new world, all our actions, motives, thoughts, and imaginings of this fife, however secret, will be brought into the open, and tested by the standards of absolute Truth, and not by false standards of custom, prejudice, or partiality. In that severe test, any adventitious advantages of this life will have no strength or force whatever, and cannot help in any way.

وَالسَّمَاء ...

11. By the Firmament...

C6074. The Firmament above is always the same, and yet it performs its diurnal round, smoothly and punctually. So does Allah's Revelation show forth the Truth, which like a circle is ever true to its centre,-which

is ever the same, though it revolves through the changing circumstances of our present life.

ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ (١١) ...

...which returns (in its round) --

وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ (١٢)

12. And by the Earth which opens out (for the gushing of springs or the sprouting of vegetation) --

C6075. The earth seems hard, but springs can gush forth and vegetables sprout through it and make it green and soft. So is Truth: hard perhaps to mortals, but through the fertilising agency of Revelation, it allows our inner personality to sprout and blossom forth.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ (١٣)

13. Behold this is the Word that distinguishes (Good from Evil):

C6076. See the last two notes.

Revelation-Allah's Truth-can pierce through the hardest crusts, and ever lead us back to the centre and goal of our life: for it separates Good from Evil definitely. It is not mere play or amusement, any more than the Sky or the Earth is. It helps us in the highest issues of our life.

وَمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ (١٤)

14. It is not a thing for amusement.

إِنَّهُمْ ...

15. As for them,

C6077. Though Allah in His Mercy has provided a piercing light to penetrate our spiritual darkness, and made our beings responsive to the growth of spiritual understanding, just as the hard earth is responsive to the sprouting of a seed or the gushing of a stream, yet there are evil, unregenerate men who plot and scheme

against the beneficent purpose of Allah. But their plots will be of no avail, and Allah's Purpose will prevail. It happened so with the Quraish who wanted to thwart the growth of Islam. It will be so in all ages.

... يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا (١٥)

they are but plotting a scheme,

وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا (١٦)

16. And I am planning a scheme,

C6078. Cf. 3:54.

فَمَهِّلِ الْكَافِرِينَ أَمْهِلْهُمْ رُوَيْدًا (١٧)

17. Therefore grant a delay to the unbelievers:

Give respite to them gently (for a while).

C6079. Gentle forbearance with Evil shows our trust in Allah and Allah's Plan: for it can never be frustrated. This does not mean that we should assist or compromise with evil, or fail to put it down where we have the power. It means patience and humility where we have no visible power to prevent Evil.

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى

Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High, Who has created (everything), and then proportioned it; And Who has measured (preordainments for each and everything even to be blessed or wretched); then guided (i.e. showed mankind the right as well as wrong paths, and guided the animals to pasture);

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al A'la

الأعلى

Introduction and Summary

This is one of the earliest of Makkan Surahs, being usually placed eighth in chronological order, and immediately after Surah 81.

The argument is that Allah has made man capable of progress by ordered steps, and by His Revelation will lead him still higher to purification and perfection.

C.267 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Wonderful are the ways of Allah
In creation, and the love with which
He guides His creatures' destinies,
Gives them the means by which to strive
For maturity by ordered steps, and reach
The end most fitted for their natures.
His Law is just and easy, and His Grace
Is ever ready to help: let us look
To the Eternal Goal, with hearts and souls
Of Purity, and glorify His name:
For in this changing, fleeting world,
His Word is always true, and will remain,
Through all the ages, ever the same.

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى (١)

1. Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord, Most High,

C6080. The word "**Lord**" by itself is an inadequate rendering here for **Rabb**. For it implies:

- cherishing,
- guarding from harm,
- sustaining,
- granting all the means and opportunities of development.

See n. 20 to 1:2.

For shortness, perhaps "Guardian-Lord" will be sufficient in the Text.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى (٢)

2. Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion;

C6081. The story of Creation is wonderful and continuous. There are several processes which we contemplate in glorifying Allah's name.

First, He brings us into being.

Secondly, He endows us with forms and faculties exactly suited to what is expected of us, and to the environments in which our life will be cast, giving to everything due order and proportion.

وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى (٣)

3. Who hath ordained laws. And granted guidance;

C6082.

Thirdly, He has ordained laws and decrees, by which we can develop ourselves and fit ourselves into His whole scheme of evolution for all His Creation. He has measured exactly the needs of all, and given us instincts and physical predispositions which fit into His decrees.

Fourthly, He gives us guidance, so that we arc not the sport of mechanical laws. Our reason and our will are exercised, that we may reach the higher destiny of man.

وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَى (٤)

4. And Who bringeth out the (green and luscious) pasture.

C6083.

Fifthly, after maturity comes decay. But even in that decay, as when green pasture turns to stubble, we subserve other ends.

In so far as we are animals, we share these processes with other forms of material Creation, animal, vegetable, and even mineral, which all have their appointed laws of growth and decay. But man's higher destiny is referred to in subsequent verses.

فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاء أَحْوَى (٥)

5. And then doth make it (but) swarthy stubble.

سَنُقْرِؤُكَ ...

6. By degrees shall We teach thee to declare (the Message),

C6084. The soul, as it reaches the Light of Allah, makes gradual progress, like a man going from darkness into light. So the Quran was revealed by stages. So all revelation from Allah comes by stages.

As usual, there are two parallel meanings:

1. that connected with the occasion of direct inspiration to the holy Prophet; and
2. the more general Message to mankind for all time. Everyone who understands the Message must declare it, in words, and still more, in his conduct.

... فَلَا تَنسَى (٦)

so thou shalt not forget,

C6085. The particular occasion was an assurance to the Prophet, that though he was unlettered, the Message given to him would be preserved in his heart and in the hearts of men. The more general sense is that mankind, having once seized great spiritual truths, will hold fast to them, except as qualified in the following verse.

... إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ

7. Except as Allah wills:

C6086. There can be no question of this having any reference to the abrogation of any verses of the Quran. For this Surah is one of the earliest revealed, being placed about eighth according to the most accepted chronological order. While the basic principles of Allah's Law remain the same, its form, expression, and application have varied from time to time, e.g., from Moses to Jesus, and from Jesus to Muhammad. It is one of the beneficent mercies of Allah that we should forget

some things of the past, lest our minds become confused and our development is retarded. Besides, Allah knows what is manifest and what is hidden, and His Will and Plan work with supreme wisdom and goodness.

إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفَى (٧)...

For He knoweth what is manifest and what is hidden.

وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلْيُسْرَى (٨)

8. And We will make it easy for thee (to follow) the simple (Path).

C6087. The Path of Islam is simple and easy. It depends on no abstruse mysteries or self-mortifications, but on straight and manly conduct in accordance with the laws of man's nature as implanted in him by Allah (30:30).

On the other hand, spiritual perfection may be most difficult, for it involves complete surrender on our part to Allah in all our affairs, thoughts, and desires: but after that surrender Allah's Grace will make our path easy.

فَذَكِّرْ إِن نَّفَعَتِ الذِّكْرَى (٩)

9. Therefore give admonition in case the admonition profits (the hearer).

C6088. This is not so strong as the Biblical phrase, "Cast not pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6).

The cases where admonition does produce spiritual profit and where it does not, are mentioned below in verses 10 and 11-13 respectively.

Allah's Message should be proclaimed to all: but particular and personal admonitions are also due to those who attend and in whose hearts is the fear of Allah; in the case of those who run away from it and dishonour it, such particular and personal admonition is useless. They are the unfortunate ones who prepare their own ruin.

سَيَذَّكَّرُ مَن يَخْشَى (١٠)

10. The admonition will be received by those who fear (Allah):

وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْأَشْقَى (١١)

11. But it will be avoided by those most unfortunate ones.

الَّذِي يَصْلَى النَّارَ الْكُبْرَى (١٢)

12. Who will enter the Great Fire,

C6089. The Great Fire is the final Penalty or Disaster in the Hereafter, as contrasted with the minor Penalties or Disasters from which all evil suffers from within in this very life.

ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى (١٣)

13. In which they will then neither die nor live.

C6090. A terrible picture of those who ruin their whole future by evil lives here below.

They introduce a discord into Creation, while life should be one great universal concord. And their past clings to them as part of their own will. They are not even like the dry swarthy stubble mentioned in verse 5 above, which grew naturally out of the luscious pasture, for they have grown harmful, in defiance of their own nature. "Neither die nor live-:

Cf. 20:74.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ ...

14. But those will prosper...

C6091. Prosper. in the highest sense; attain to Bliss or Salvation; as opposed to "enter the Fire.

... مَن تَزَكَّى (١٤)

...who purify themselves.

C6092. The first process in godliness is to cleanse ourselves in body, mind, and Soul. Then we shall be in a fit state to see and proclaim the Glory of Allah. That leads us to our actual absorption in Praise and Prayer.

وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى (١٥)

15. And glorify the name of their Guardian-Lord, and (lift their hearts) in Prayer.

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (١٦)

16. Nay (behold),

ye prefer the life of this world;

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى (١٧)

17. But the Hereafter is better and more enduring.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى (١٨)

18. And this is in the Books of the earliest (Revelations) --

C6093. The law of righteousness and godliness is not a new law, nor are the vanity and short duration of this world preached here for the first time. But spiritual truths have to be renewed and reiterated again and again.

صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى (١٩)

19. The Books of **Abraham** and **Moses**.

C6094. No Book of Abraham has come down to us. But the Old Testament recognises that Abraham was a prophet (Gen. 20:7).

There is a book in Greek, which has been translated by Mr. G.H. Box, called the Testament of Abraham (published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, London, 1927). It seems to be a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. The Greek Text was probably written in the second Christian century, in Egypt, but in its present form it probably goes back only to the 9th or 10th Century. It was popular among the

Christians. Perhaps the Jewish Midrash also refers to a Testament of Abraham.

C6095. The original Revelation of Moses, of which the Present Pentateuch is a surviving recension.

See Appendix II.

The present Gospels do not come under the definition of the "earliest- Books. Nor could they be called "Books of Jesus': they were written not by him, but about him, and long after his death.



إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ

Verily, to Us will be their return; Then verily, for Us will be their reckoning.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ghashiyah

الْغَاشِيَة

Introduction and Summary

This is a late Surah of early Makkan period, perhaps close in date to S.53. Its subject matter is the contrast between the destinies of the Good and the Evil in the Hereafter---0n the Day when the true balance will be restored: the Signs of Allah even in this life should remind us of the Day of Account, for Allah is good and just, and His creation is for a just Purpose.

C.268 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Have you heard of that tremendous Day
When the Good from the Evil will be separated?

There will be souls that day will burn
And grovel in the blazing Fire of Wrath!
No Food can fill their Hunger: no Drink,
Alas, can slake their fierce Thirst!

There will be Souls that Day will shout
With joy to the glory of their Lord!
Their past Endeavour will now be Achievement.
Raised high on Thrones of Dignity they
Will be Guests at the sumptuous Feast of Bliss.

Let man but look at his dominion o'er
The beasts of the field, or his glorious canopy
Of stars, or the Eternal Hills that feed
His streams, or the wide expanse of Mother
Earth that nurtures him, and he
Will see the ordered Plan of Allah.
To Him must he return and give account!
Let him, then, learn his Lesson and live!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْغَاشِيَةِ (١)

1. Has the story reached thee, of the Overwhelming (Event)?

C6096. Gashiyah: the thing or event that overshadows or overwhelms, that covers over or makes people lose their senses.

In 12:107, it is described as the "covering veil of the Wrath of Allah": where see n. 1790.

The Day of Judgment is indicated, as the Event of overwhelming importance in which all our petty differences of this imperfect world are covered over and overwhelmed in a new world of perfect justice and truth. (R).

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ (٢)

2. Some faces, **that Day**, will be humiliated,

C6097. Cf. 75:22, 24.

عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ (٣)

3. Laboring (hard), weary --

C6098. On the faces of the wicked will appear the hard labour and consequent fatigue of the task they will have in battling against the fierce Fire which their own Deeds will have kindled.

تَصْلَى نَارًا حَامِيَةً (٤)

4. The while they enter the Blazing Fire --

تُسْقَى مِنْ عَيْنٍ آنِيَةٍ (٥)

5. The while they are given, to drink, of a boiling hot spring.

لَّيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِن ضَرِيعٍ (٦)

6. No food will there be for them but a bitter ***Dhari***,

C6099. The root-meaning implies again the idea of humiliation.

It is a plant, bitter and thorny, loathsome in smell and appearance, which will neither give fattening nourishment to the body nor in any way satisfy the burning pangs of hunger, -a fit plant for Hell, like **Zaqqum** (56:52; or 17:60, n. 2250).

لَا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِن جُوعٍ (٧)

7. Which will neither nourish nor satisfy hunger.

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاعِمَةٌ (٨)

8. (Other) faces that Day will be joyful.

لِسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ (٩)

9. Pleased with their Striving --

C6100. Notice the parallelism in contrast, between the fate of the Wicked and that of the Righteous.

In the one case there was humiliation in their faces; in the other, there is joy; where there was labour and weariness in warding off the Fire, there is instead a healthy Striving, which is itself pleasurable-a Striving which is a pleasant consequence of the spiritual Endeavour in the earthly life, which may have brought trouble or persecution from without, but which brought inward peace and satisfaction.

فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ (١٠)

10. In a Garden on high,

C6101. The most important point is their inward state of joy and satisfaction, mentioned in verses 8-9.

Now are mentioned the outer things of bliss, the chief of which is the Garden. The Garden is in contrast to the Fire. Its chief beauty will be that they will hear there nothing unbecoming, or foolish, or vain. It will be a Garden on high, in all senses,-fit for the best, highest, and noblest.

لَّا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لَاغِيَةً (١١)

11. Where they shall hear no (word) of vanity:

فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ (١٢)

12. Therein will be a bubbling spring:

C6102. Instead of the boiling hot spring (verse 5) there will be a bubbling spring of sparkling water.

Instead of the grovelling and grumbling in the place of Wrath, there Will be couches, with all the accompaniments of a brilliant assembly.

فِيهَا سُرُرٌ مَّرْفُوعَةٌ (١٣)

13. Therein will be Thrones (of dignity), raised on high.

وَأَكْوَابٌ مَّوْضُوعَةٌ (١٤)

14. Goblets placed (ready).

وَنَمَارِقُ مَصْفُوفَةٌ (١٥)

15. And Cushions set in rows,

وَزَرَابِيُّ مَبْثُوثَةٌ (١٦)

16. And rich carpets (All) spread out.

أَفَلَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ ...

17. Do they not look at the Camels,

C6103. In case men neglect the Hereafter as of no account, they are asked to contemplate four things, which they can see in every-day life, and which are full of meaning, high design, and the goodness of Allah to man. The first mentioned is the domesticated animal, which for Arab countries is par excellence the Camel.

What a wonderful structure has this Ship of the Desert? He can store water in his stomach for days. He can live on dry and thorny desert shrubs. His limbs are adapted to his life. He can carry men and goods. His flesh can be eaten. Camel's hair can be used in weaving. And withal, he is so gentle! Who can sing his praises enough?

كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ (١٧) ...

how they are made? --

وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ (١٨)

18. And at the Sky, how it is raised high? --

C6104. The second thing they should consider is the noble blue vault high above them,-with the sun and moon, the stars and planets, and other heavenly bodies. This scene is full of beauty and magnificence, design and order, plainness and mystery. And yet we receive our light and warmth from the sun, and what would our physical lives be without these influences that come from such enormous distances?

وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ ...

19. And at the Mountains,

C6105. From every-day utility and affection in the Camel, to the utility in grandeur in the heavens above us, we had two instances touching our individual as well as our social lives. In the third instance, in the Mountains we come to the utility to human kind generally in the services the Mountains perform in storing water, in moderating climate, and in various other ways which it is the business of Physical Geography to investigate and describe.

... كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ (١٩)

How they are fixed firm? --

وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ (٢٠)

20. And at the Earth, how it is spread out?

C6106. The fourth and last instance given is that of the Earth as a whole, the habitation of mankind in our present phase of life. The Earth is a globe, and yet how marvelously it seems to be spread out before us in plains, valleys, hills, deserts, seas, etc! Can man, seeing these things, fail to see a Plan and Purpose in his life, or fail to turn to the great Creator before Whom he win have to give an account after this life is done?

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مُذَكِّرٌ (٢١)

21. Therefore do thou give admonition,
for thou art one to admonish.

لَّسْتَ عَلَيْهِم بِمُصَيْطِرٍ (٢٢)

22. Thou art not one to manage (men's) affairs.

C6107. The Prophet of Allah is sent to teach and direct people on the way. He is not sent to force their will, or to punish them, except in so far as he may receive authority to do so. Punishment belongs to Allah alone. And Punishment is certain in the Hereafter, when true values will be restored.

إِلَّا مَن تَوَلَّى وَكَفَرَ (٢٣)

23. But if any turn away and reject Allah --

فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ (٢٤)

24. Allah will punish him with a mighty Punishment.

إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ (٢٥)

25. For to Us will be their Return;

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ (٢٦)

26. Then it will be for Us to call them to account.

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

(It will be said to the pious): "O (you) the one in (complete) rest and satisfaction! "Come back to your Lord, Well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing unto Him!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Fajr

الْفَجْر

Introduction and Summary

This is one of the earliest of the Surahs to be revealed---probably within the first ten chronological order.

Its mystic meaning is suggested by contrasts in nature and in man's long history. Thus does it enforce the lesson of Faith in the Hereafter to "those who understand". Man's history and legendry lore show that greatness does not last and the proudest are brought low. For enforcing moral and spiritual truths, the strictest history is no better than legend. Indeed all

artistic history is legend, for it is written from a special point of view.

Man is easily cowed by the contrasts in his own fortunes, and yet he does not learn from them the lesson of forbearance and kindness to others, and the final elevation of goodness in the Hereafter. When all the things on which his mind and heart are set on this earth shall be crushed to nothingness, he will see the real glory and power, love and beauty, of Allah, for these are the light of the Garden of Paradise.

C.269 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Man is apt to forget the contrasts
In nature and life, and all that they mean
In his spiritual growth. Perchance his mind
Is so absorbed in what he sees,
That he doubts the vast Realities
He does not see. The Present makes
Him blind to the Past and to the Future.
Fooled by glory, he fears not a fall:
And baulked in disaster, he gives up Hope
And sometimes Faith. Let him study
Nature, and History, and restore his Faith:
Realising the Sure Event, the Hereafter,
Let him find his fullest fulfilment
In the service and the good pleasure of Allah!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالْفَجْرِ (١)

1. By the Break of Day,

C6108. Four striking contrasts are mentioned, to show Allah's Power and Justice, and appeal to "those who understand".

The first is the glory and mystery of the Break of Day. It just succeeds the deepest dark of the Night, when the first rays of light break through. Few people except those actually in personal touch with nature can feel its compelling power.

In respect both of beauty and terror, of hope and inspiration, of suddenness and continuing increase of light and joy, this "holy time" of night may well stand as the type of spiritual awakening from darkness to Faith, from Death to Resurrection.

وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ (٢)

2. By the Nights twice five;

C6109. By the Ten Nights are usually understood the first ten nights of *Dhu al Hijjah*, the sacred season of Pilgrimage.

From the most ancient times Makkah was the centre of Arab pilgrimage. The story of Abraham is intimately connected with it: see 2:125-127 and notes, also n. 217 to 2:197.

In times of Paganism various superstitions were introduced, which Islam swept away. Islam also purified the rites and ceremonies, giving them new meaning.

The ten days specially devoted to the Hajj introduce a striking contrast in the life of Makkah and of the pilgrims. Makkah, from being a quiet secluded city, is then thronged with thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the world. They discard their ordinary dress-representing every kind of costume-to the simple and ordinary *Ihram* (n. 217); they refrain from every kind of fighting and quarrel; they abstain from every kind of luxury and self-indulgence; they hold all life sacred, however humble, except in the way of carefully-regulated sacrifice; and they spend their nights in prayer and meditation.

وَالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ (٣)

3. By the Even and Odd (contrasted);

C6110. The contrast between even and odd forms the subject of learned argument among those who deal with the properties of numbers. In any case, even and odd follow each other in regular succession: each is independent, and yet neither is self-sufficient. In ultimate analysis every even number is a pair of odd ones. And all things go in pairs: see 36:36, and n. 3981.

In the animal world pairs are but two individuals, and yet each is a complement of the other. Both abstract and concrete things are often understood in contrast with their opposites. Why should we not, in spiritual matters, understand this life better with reference to the Hereafter, and why should we disbelieve in the Hereafter simply because we cannot conceive of anything different from our present life?

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسْرِ (٤)

4. And by the Night when it passeth away --

C6111. That is, the last part of the night, just before full day-light. Note the gradations:

- first, the turn of the night, when just the first rays of daylight break through;
- secondly, the social and institutional rites of religion, like those during the ten nights of Pilgrimage;
- thirdly, when the usual contrast between the Here and Hereafter vanishes, and we can see heaven even here; and
- lastly, when this world vanishes, the full light of Day arrives, and we see Reality face to face.

هَلْ فِي ذَٰلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِي حِجْرٍ (٥)

5. Is there (not) in these and adjuration (or evidence) for those who understand?

C6112. All these Signs draw our attention, like solemn adjurations in speech, to the profoundest mystery of our inner life, viz., how from utter depths of darkness-ignorance or even degradation-Allah's wonderful light or

Revelation can lead us by contrast into the most beautiful sunshine of a glorious spiritual Day.

But the contrast suggest also the opposite process as a corollary-how resistance to Allah's fight would destroy us utterly, converting our greatness or glory to perdition, as happened with the peoples of Arab antiquity, the 'Ad and the Thamud, and the type of the powerful but arrogant and godless monarch, the Pharaoh of Egypt. Like a man with a bounded horizon, the average man does not understand these long-range mysteries of life, and we have need to pray that we may be of "those who understand".

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ (٦)

6. Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the 'Ad (people) --

C6113. For the 'Ad see n. 1040 to 7:65.

They seem to have possessed an ancient civilisation, which succumbed when they persistently broke Allah's law.

إِرَمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ (٧)

7. Of the (city of) Iram, with lofty pillars,

C6114. Iram would seem to have been an ancient 'Ad capital, in southern Arabia. It boasted of lofty architecture ("lofty pillars").

Some Commentators understand **Iram** to be the name of an eponymous hero of the 'Ad, in which case the following fine, "with lofty pillars", should be construed "of lofty stature". The 'Ad were a tall race.

الَّتِي لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِي الْبِلَادِ (٨)

8. The like of which were not produced in (all) the land?

C6115. This tract of southern Arabia was once very prosperous (Arabia Felix) and contains ruins and inscriptions. It has always been an object of great

interest to the Arabia. In the time of Mu'awiyah some precious stones were found among the ruins in this locality.

Quite recently, a bronze lion's head and a bronze piece of gutter with a Sabaean inscription, found in Najran, have been described in the British Museum Quarterly, vol, XI, No. 4, Sept. 1937.

وَثَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ (٩)

9. And with the Thamud (people), who cut out (huge) rocks in the valley? --

C6116. For the Thamud see n. 1043 to 7:73.

Their civilisation shows traces of Egyptian, Syrian, and (later) Greek and Roman influences. They built fine temples, tombs, and buildings cut out of the solid rock. The cult of the goddess Lat flourished among them.

وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الْأَوْتَادِ (١٠)

10. And with Pharaoh, Lord of Stakes?

C6117. For "**Lord of Stakes**", see 38:12, n 4160.

For Pharaoh's arrogance and his fall see 20:43, 78-79.

The three examples given, the 'Ad, the Thamud, and Pharaoh, show that neither nations nor individuals, however mighty, prosperous, or firmly established they may be, can live if they transgress the Law of Allah. The Law of Allah, which is also the law of the higher nature which He has bestowed on us, made them in the first place great and glorious: when they fell from it and "heaped mischief on mischief", they were swept away.

الَّذِينَ طَغَوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ (١١)

11. (All) these transgressed Beyond bounds in the lands.

فَأَكْثَرُوا فِيهَا الْفَسَادَ (١٢)

12. And heaped therein Mischief (on mischief).

فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ (١٣)

13. Therefore did thy Lord pour on them a scourge of diverse chastisement:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمِرْصَادِ (١٤)

14. For thy Lord is (As a Guardian) on a watchtower.

C6118. Even though Allah's punishment is delayed, it is not to be supposed that He does not see all things. Allah's providence is ever vigilant: His punishment of evil doers is a form of justice to the weak and the righteous whom they oppress. It is part of the signification of His title as **Rabb** (Cherisher). (R).

فَأَمَّا الْإِنسَانُ ...

15. Now, as for man,

C6119. Contrast with Allah's justice and watchful care, man's selfishness and pettiness. Allah tries us both by prosperity and adversity:

- in the one we should show humility and kindness;
- and in the other patience and faith.

On the contrary, we get puffed up in prosperity and depressed in adversity, putting false values on this world's goods.

... إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ

when his Lord trieth him giving him honor and gifts, then saith he, (puffed up),

... رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ (١٥)

"My Lord hath honored me."

... وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ

16. But when He trieth him, restricting his subsistence for him,

C6120. Subsistence, in both the literal and the figurative sense. Allah provides for all, but people complain if the

provision is measured and restricted to their needs, circumstances, and antecedents, and does not come up to their desires or expectations, or is different from that given to people in quite different circumstances.

فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهَانَنِ (١٦) ...

then saith he (in despair), "My Lord hath humiliated me!"

كَلَّا بَل لَّا تُكْرِمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ (١٧)

17. Nay, nay! **but ye** honor not the orphans!

C6121. Even at our own valuation, if we are favoured with superfluities, do we think of the fatherless children, or the struggling poor?

On the contrary, too many men are but ready to embezzle the helpless orphan's inheritance, and to waste their own substance in worthless riot instead of supplying the people's real needs.

وَلَا تَحَاضُّونَ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ (١٨)

18. Nor do ye encourage **one another** to feed the poor! --

C6122. Kindness and generosity set up standards which even worldly men feel bound to follow out of social considerations even if they are not moved by higher motives. But the wicked find plausible excuses for their own hard-heartedness, and by their evil example choke up the springs of charity and kindness in others.

وَتَأْكُلُونَ التُّرَاثَ أَكْلًا لَّمًّا (١٩)

19. And **ye devour inheritance** -- all with greed.

C6123. Inheritance is abused in two ways.

1. Guardians and trustees for the inheritance of minors or women or persons unable to look after their own interests should fulfil their trusts with even more care than they devote to their own interests. Instead of that they selfishly "devour" the property.

2. Persons who inherit property in their own rights should remember that in that case, too, it is a sacred trust. They must use it for the purposes, objects, and duties which they also inherit. It gives them no license to live in idleness or waste their days in riotous show.

وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا (٢٠)

20. And ye love wealth with inordinate love!

كَلَّا إِذَا دُكَّتِ الْأَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا (٢١)

21. Nay! when the earth is pounded to powder,

C6124. Our attention is now called to the Day of Reckoning. Whether we failed to respect the rights of the helpless here or actually suppressed those rights in our mad love for the good thing of this life, we shall have to answer in the realm of Reality. This solid earth, which we imagine to be so real, will crumble to powder like dust before the real Presence, manifested in glory.

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا (٢٢)

22. And thy Lord cometh and His angels, rank upon rank,

وَجِيءَ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ ...

23. And Hell, that Day, is brought (face to face) --

C6125. The Retribution will at last come, and we shall realise it in our inmost being, all the illusions of this fleeting world having been swept away. Then we shall remember, and wish, too late, that we had repented.

Why not repent now?

Why not bring forth the fruits of repentance now, as a preparation for the Hereafter?

... يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنسَانُ وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذِّكْرَى (٢٣)

on that Day will man remember, but how will that remembrance profit him?

يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي (٢٤)

24. He will say:

"Ah! would that I had sent forth (Good Deeds) for (this) my (Future) Life."

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُعَذِّبُ عَذَابَهُ أَحَدٌ (٢٥)

25. For, that Day, His Chastisement will be such as none (else) can inflict,

C6126. "Chastisement" in this verse and the "binding in bonds" in the next verse are two distinct phases of the Penalty.

"Chastisement" involves pain and agony, such as cannot be imagined anywhere else, or from any other source, for it touches our inmost soul and cannot be compared with anything our bodies may suffer or others may inflict.

"Bonds" imply confinement, want of freedom, the closing of a door which was once open but which we deliberately passed by. We see that others accepted in faith and entered that door. This shutting out of what might have been in worse than any other bonds or confinement we can imagine, and may be worse than actual chastisement.

وَلَا يُوثِقُ وَثَاقَهُ أَحَدٌ (٢٦)

26. And His bonds will be such as none (other) can bind.

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ ...

27. (To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul,

C6127. The righteous enter into their inheritance and receive their welcome with a title that suggests freedom from all pain, sorrow, doubt, struggle, disappointment, passion, and even further desire; at rest, in peace; in a state of complete satisfaction.

In Muslim theology, this stage of the soul is the final stage of bliss. The unregenerate human soul, that seeks its satisfaction in the lower earthly desires, is the

Ammara (12:53). The self-reproaching soul that feels conscious of sin and resists it is the **Lawwama** (75:2, and n. 5810).

... الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ (٢٧)

in (complete) rest and satisfaction!

... ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكِ

28. "Come back thou to thy Lord --

C6128. Note that Evil finds itself isolated, and cries out in lonely agony (verse 24), while Good receives a warm welcome from the Lord of Goodness Himself,-also that it is the soul which enters heaven, and not the gross body which perishes.

... رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً (٢٨)

well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him!

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي (٢٩)

29. "Enter thou, then, among my Devotees!

وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي (٣٠)

30. "Yea, enter thou my Heaven"!

C6129. The climax of the whole is: "Enter My Heaven!"

Men may have imagined all kinds of heaven before, and many types are used in the sacred Word itself. But nothing can express the reality itself better than "My Heaven"-Allah's own Heaven! May we reach it through Allah's grace! (R).

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ أَيَحْسَبُ أَن لَّن يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ

Verily, We have created man in toil. Thinks he that none can overcome him?

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Balad



Introduction and Summary

This is an early Makkan revelation, and refers to the mystic relation (by divine sanction) of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) with the city of Makkah.

He was born in that City, which had already been sacred for ages before. He was nurtured in that City and had (to use a modern phrase) the freedom of that City, belonging, as he did, to the noble family which held the government of its sacred precincts in its hands.

But he was an orphan, and orphans in his day had a poor time. But his mind was turned things divine. He protested against the prevailing idolatry and sin, and his parent City persecuted him and cast him out.

He made another City, *yathrib*, his own: it became the *Madinah al Nabi*, the City of Prophet, and it has ever since been called Madinah. We can speak of Madinah as the Prophet's child.

But the Prophet ever cherished in his heart the love of his parent City of Makkah, and in the fullness of time was received in triumph there. He purified it from all idols and abominations, reestablished the worship of the One True God, overthrew the purse-proud selfish autocracy, restored the sway of the righteous (people of the Right Hand), the liberty of the slave, and the rights of the poor and downtrodden. What a wonderful career centering round a City? It becomes a symbol of the world's spiritual history.

C.270 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The Prophet's own City persecuted him.
Honoured by his nativity, it sought to slay him:
Yet he loved it and purged it of all that was wrong.
What toil and struggle did it not involve?
Man is made for toil and struggle:
Let him not boast of ease and wealth.
He will be called to account for all his doings.
Let him use his God-given faculties, and tread
The steep path that leads to Heaven's Heights:
The steps thereto are love, unselfish love,
Given freely to Allah's creatures---all those
In need---and Faith in Allah, and Patience
Joined with self-restraint and kindness.
Thus only can we reach the ranks
Of the blest Companions of the Right Hand!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِهَٰذَا الْبَلَدِ (١)

1. I do call to witness this City --

C6130. The appeal to the close ties between the holy Prophet and his parent City of Makkah has been explained in the Introduction to this Surah.

It is a symbol of man's own history. Man is born for toil and struggle, and this is the substantive proposition in verse 4 below, which this appeal leads up to.

وَأَنتَ حِلٌّ ...

2. And thou art a freeman ...

C6131. Hillun: an inhabitant, a man with lawful rights, a man freed from such obligations as would attach to a stranger to the city, a freeman in a wider sense than the technical sense to which the word is restricted in modern usage.

The Prophet should have been honoured in his native city. He was actually being persecuted. He should have been loved, as a parent loves a child. Actually his life was being sought, and those who believed in him were under a ban. But time was to show that he was to come triumphant to his native city after having made Madinah sacred by his fife and work.

... بِهَٰذَا الْبَلَدِ (٢)

... of this City --

وَوَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدَ (٣)

3. And (the mystic ties of) Parent and Child --

C6132. A parent loves a child: ordinarily the father is proud and the mother, in spite of her birth-pains, experiences supreme joy when the child is born. But in abnormal circumstances there may be misunderstanding, even hatred between parent and child. So Makkah cast

out her most glorious son, but it was only for a time. Makkah was sound at heart; only her power had been usurped by an ignorant autocracy which passed away, and Makkah was to receive back her glory at the hands of the son whom she had rejected but whom she welcomed back later. And Makkah retains for all time her sacred character as the centre of Islam.

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ (٤)

4. Verily We have created Man into toil and struggle.

C6133.

Cf. "Man is born unto troubles as the sparks fly upward" (Job, 5:7);

"For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief" (Ecclesiastes, ii. 23).

Man's life is full of sorrow and vexation; but our text has a different shade of meaning: man is born to strive and struggle; and if he suffers from hardships, he must exercise patience, for Allah will make his way smooth for him (65:7; 94:5-6).

On the other hand no man should boast of worldly goods or worldly prosperity (see verses 5-7 below).

أَيَحْسَبُ أَن لَّن يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ (٥)

5. Thinketh he, that none hath power over him?

C6134. See the end of last note.

If a man has wealth, influence, or power, he should not behave as if it is to last for ever, or as if he has no responsibility for his acts and can do what he likes. All his gifts and advantages are given to him for trial. Allah, Who bestowed them on him, can take them away, and will do so if man fails in his trial.

يَقُولُ أَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُّبَدًا (٦)

6. He may say (boastfully): "Wealth have I squandered in abundance!"

C6135. The man who feels no responsibility and thinks that he can do what he likes in life forgets his

responsibility to Allah. He boasts of his wealth and scatters it about, thinking that he can thus purchase the support of the world. For a time he may. But a rude awakening must come soon, for he bases his hopes on unsubstantial things. Or if he spends his substance on self-indulgence, he is weakening himself and putting himself into snares that must destroy him.

أَيَحْسَبُ أَن لَّمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ (٧)

7. Thinketh he that none beholdeth him?

C6136. Allah watches him, and sees all his acts and motives, and all the secret springs of his follies. But lest he should think the higher forces too remote for him, let him look within himself and use the faculties which Allah has given him.

See the next verses following.

أَلَمْ نَجْعَل لَّهُ عَيْنَيْنِ (٨)

8. Have We not made for him a pair of eyes? --

وَلِسَانًا ...

9. And a tongue,

C6137. The eyes give us the faculty of seeing, and may be taken in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. In the same way the tongue gives us the faculty of tasting in both senses. Along with the lips, it also enables us to speak, to ask for information and seek guidance, and to celebrate the praises of Allah.

... وَشَفَتَيْنِ (٩)

and a pair of lips? --

وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ (١٠)

10. And shown him the two highways?

C6138. The two highways of life are:

1. the steep and difficult path of virtue, which is further described in the verses following, and
2. the easy path of vice, and the rejection of Allah, referred to in verses 19-20 below.

Allah has given us not only the faculties implied in the eyes, the tongue, and the lips, but has also given us the judgment by which we can choose our way; and He has sent us Teachers and Guides, with Revelation, to show us the right and difficult way.

فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ (١١)

11. But he hath made no haste on the path that is steep.

C6139. In spite of the faculties with which Allah has endowed man and the guidance which He has given him, man has been remiss. By no means has he been eager to follow the steep and difficult path which is for his own spiritual good.

Cf. Matt. 7:14: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto live, and few there be that find it".

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ (١٢)

12. And what will explain to thee the path that is steep? --

فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ (١٣)

13. (It is:) freeing the bondman;

C6140. The difficult path of virtue is defined as the path of charity or unselfish love, and three specific instances are given for our understanding: viz.

1. freeing the bondman,
2. feeding the orphan, and
3. feeding the indigent down in the dust.

As regards the bondman, we are to understand not only a reference to legal slavery, but other kinds of slavery which flourish especially in advanced societies.

There is political slavery, industrial slavery, and social slavery.

There is the slavery of conventions, of ignorance, and of superstition.

There is slavery to wealth or passions or power.

The good man tries to liberate men and women from all kinds of slavery, often at great danger to himself. But he begins by first liberating himself. (R).

أَوْ إِطْعَامٌ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ (١٤)

14. Or the giving of food in a day of privation...

C6141. Feed those who need it, both literally and figuratively; but do so especially when there is privation or famine, literal or figurative, i.e., when or where the sources of sustenance, physical, moral, or spiritual, are cut off.

يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ (١٥)

15. To the orphan with claims of relationship,

C6142. All orphans should be fed and helped. But ordinary orphans will come under the indigent in verse 16 below.

The orphans related to us have a special claim on us. They should be near and dear to us, and if charity begins at home, they have the first claim on us.

أَوْ مِسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ (١٦)

16. Or to the indigent (down) in the dust.

C6143. Persons down in the dust can only be helped from motives of pure charity, because nothing can be expected of them-neither praise nor advertisement nor any other advantage to the helper. Such help is help indeed. But there may be various degrees, and the help will be suited to the needs.

ثُمَّ كَانَ ...

17. Then will he be...

C6144. Such practical charity and love will be the acid test of Faith and the teaching of all virtues.

The virtues are summed up under the names of Patience (the Arabic word includes constancy and self-restraint) and compassionate kindness. Not only will they be the test by which the sincerity of their Faith will be judged; they will be the fruit which their Faith will constantly produce.

... مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ (١٧)

... of those who believe, and enjoin patience, (constancy, and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion.

أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ (١٨)

18. Such are the Companions of the Right Hand.

C6145. Cf. 56:27-40, also n. 5223.

They will be those who achieve salvation.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ (١٩)

19. But those who reject Our Signs, they are the (unhappy) companions of the Left Hand.

C6146. Cf. 56:41-56, also n. 5223.

They will be the unfortunate ones enveloped in the Fire of lasting Penalty, heaped over them and all round them.

عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُؤْصَدَةٌ (٢٠)

20. On them will be Fire Vaulted over (all round).

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا

Truly he succeeds that purifies it, And he fails that corrupts it!.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Shmas

الشَّمْس

Introduction and Summary

This is one of the early Makkan revelations. Beginning with a fine nature passage, and leading up to man's need of realising his spiritual responsibility, it ends with a warning of the terrible consequences for those who fear not the Hereafter.

C.271 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

All nature around us and her pageants,
And the soul of man within, proclaim
The goodness of Allah. Allah gave the soul
The power of choice and the sense of Right

And Wrong. Let man keep it pure and attain
Salvation---soil it with sin and reach
Perdition. Inordinate wrongdoing ruined
The Thamud. They defied Allah's sacred Law
And His Prophet, and went to Destruction for their crime.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا (١)

1. By the Sun and his (glorious) splendor;

C6147. Six types are taken in three pairs, from Allah's mighty works in nature, as tokens or evidence of Allah's providence and the contrasts in His sublime creation, which yet conduce to cosmic harmony (verses 1-6).

Then (verses 7-8) the soul of man, with internal order and proportion in its capacities and faculties, as made by Allah, is appealed to as having been endowed with the power of discriminating between right and wrong.

Then the conclusion is stated in verses 9-10, that man's success or failure, prosperity or bankruptcy, would depend upon his keeping that soul pure or his corrupting it.

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَاهَا (٢)

2. By the Moon as she follows him;

C6148. The first pair is the glorious sun, the source of our light and physical life, and the moon which follows or acts as second to the sun for illuminating our world.

The moon, when she is in the sky with the sun, is pale and inconspicuous; in the sun's absence she shines with reflected light and may metaphorically be called the sun's vicegerent. So with Revelation and the great Prophets who brought it; and the minor Teachers who derive their light reflected, or perhaps doubly reflected, from the original source.

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّاهَا (٣)

3. By the Day as it shows up (the Sun's) glory;

C6149. The next contrasted pair consists, not of luminaries, but conditions, or periods of time, Day and Night.

The Day reveals the sun's glory and the Night conceals it from our sight. So there may be contrasts in our subjective reception of divine light, but it is there, working all the time, and must reappear in its own good time.

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا (٤)

4. By the Night as it conceals it;

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا (٥)

5. By the Firmament and its (wonderful) structure;

C6150. The next contrasted pair is the wonderful firmament on high, and the earth below our feet, stretching away to our wide horizons.

The sky gives us rain, and the earth gives us food. Yet both work together; for the rain is moisture sucked up from the earth, and the food cannot grow without the heat and warmth of the sun.

There are many other contrasts under this head; yet they all point to unity.

وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا (٦)

6. By the Earth and its (wide) expanse;

C6151. The **ma masdariya** in Arabic, in this and the subsequent clauses, is best translated in English by nouns. Thus what would literally be "and the (wonderful) making or construction of it" or "the fact of its (wonderful) construction" is, idiomatically, "its (wonderful) structure." "The (wide) spreading out" of the earth is rendered "its (wide) expanse," and so on.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا (٧)

7. By the Soul, and the proportion and order Given to it;

C6152. Allah makes the soul, and gives it order, proportion, and relative perfection, in order to adapt it for the particular circumstances in which it has to live its life.

Cf. 32:9. See also n. 120 to 2:117.

He breathes into it an understanding of what is sin, impiety, wrong-doing and what is piety and right conduct, in the special circumstances in which it may be placed. This is the most precious gift of all to man, the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong.

After the six external evidences mentioned in verses 1-6 above, this internal evidence of Allah's goodness is mentioned as the greatest of all. By these various tokens man should learn that his success, his prosperity, his salvation depends on himself---on his keeping his soul pure as Allah made it; and his failure, his decline, his perdition depends on his soiling his soul by choosing evil.

فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (٨)

8. And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; --

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا (٩)

9. Truly he succeeds that purifies it,

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا (١٠)

10. And he fails that corrupts it!

C6153. This is the core of the Sura, and it is illustrated by a reference to the story of the Thamud in the following verses.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا (١١)

11. The Thamud (people) rejected (their prophet) through their inordinate wrongdoing.

C6154. The allusion to the story of the Thamud will be understood by a reference to 7:73-79; see specially n. 1044.

Their prophet was Salih, but he had to deal with an arrogant people, who oppressed the poor and denied them their rights of watering and pasture for their cattle.

إِذِ انبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا (١٢)

12. Behold, the most wicked Man among them was deputed (for impiety).

C6155. The prophet Salih was given a certain she-camel as a Sign, a test case, "This she-camel of Allah is Sign unto you: so leave her to graze in Allah's earth and let her come to no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment" (7:73).

But they plotted to kill her and sent the most wicked man among them to dare and do that deed of impiety. It was probably when she came to drink at the stream that she was hamstrung and killed.

See 26:155, and 54:27.

فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا (١٣)

13. But the **messenger of Allah** said to them:

"It is a She-camel of Allah! and (bar her not from) having her drink!"

C6156. That is, Salih: see last note.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا ...

14. Then they rejected him (as a false prophet), and they hamstrung her.

C6157. The man who was deputed to do the impious deed of hamstringing the she-camel had of course the sympathy and cooperation of the whole people. Only he was more daring than the rest.

فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُم بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا (١٤) ...

So their Lord, on account of their crime, obliterated their traces and made them equal (in destruction, High and low)!

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا (١٥)

15. **And for Him** is no fear of its consequences.

C6158. This verse has been variously construed. I follow the general opinion in referring the pronoun "**Him**" to "their Lord" in the last verse and the pronoun "its" to the Punishment that was meted out to all, high and low, equally.

In that case the meaning would be: God decreed the total destruction of the Thamud;

in the case of creatures any such destruction might cause a loss to them, and they might fear the consequences of such loss or destruction, but Allah has created and can create at will, and there can be no question of any such apprehension in His case.

An alternative view is that "**him**" refers to the prophet Salih, mentioned in verse 13. Then the interpretation would be: Salih had no fear of the consequences for himself; he had warned the wicked according to his commission; he was saved by Allah's mercy as a just and righteous man, and he left them with regrets (7:79).

Yet another alternative refers "**him**" to the wicked man (mentioned in verse 12) who hamstrung the she-camel: he feared not the consequences of his deed.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ

So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah), And (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best -- We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Layl

اللَّيْل

Introduction and Summary

This was one of the first Surahs to be revealed---within the first ten; and may be placed in date close to Surah 89 and Surah 93. Note that in all these three Surahs the mystery and the contrast as between Night and Day are appealed to for the consolation of man in his spiritual yearning. Here we are told to strive our utmost towards Allah, and He will give us every help and satisfaction.

C.272 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

When we consider Allah's wonderful Creation,
We see many mysteries---many opposites -
Many differences; the succession of nights
And days, the creation of male and female.
Can we wonder at the differences
In the nature and objectives of man?
He is endowed with Will, and he must strive
For the Right through all his diverse paths.
For the righteous, the way is made the smoother
For bliss; for the arrogant crooked will,
The way is smoother for Misery.
But Allah's guidance is always nigh,
If man will choose it. And what
Is the goal for those who choose aright? -
The sight of the Face of Allah Most High:
For that indeed is happiness supreme.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَى (١)

1. By the Night as it conceals (the light);

C6159. The evidence of three things in invoked, viz., Night, Day, and Sex, and the conclusion is stated in verse 4, that men's aims are diverse.

But similarly there are contrasts in nature.

What contrast can be greater than between Night and Day?

When the Night spreads her veil, the sun's light is hidden, but not lost. The sun is in his place all the time,

and will come forth in all his glory again in his own good time.

Cf. 91:3, 4, and n. 6149.

Man pursuing diverse aims may find, owing to his own position. Allah's light obscured from him for a time, but he must strive hard to put himself in a position to reach it in all its glory.

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّى (٢)

2. By the Day as it appears in glory;

وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى (٣)

3. By (the mystery of) the creation of male and female --

C6160. Ma masdariya as in 91:5-7; see there n. 6151.

C6161. The wonder of the sexes runs through all life. There is attraction between opposite; each performs its own functions, having special characters, primary and secondary, within limited spheres, and yet both have common characteristics in many other spheres. Each is indispensable to the other.

Love in its noblest sense is the type of heavenly love and the highest good; in its debasement it leads to the lowest sins and the worst crimes. Here, then, striving is necessary for the highest good.

إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّى (٤)

4. Verily, (the ends) ye strive for are diverse.

C6162. There are wide contrasts in the nature and aims of men. These may be broadly divided into two classes, good and evil.

As night replaces day on account of certain relative position, but does not annihilate it, so evil may for a time obscure good but cannot blot it out.

Again, night in certain circumstances (e.g. for rest) is a blessing; so certain things, which may seem evils to us, may be really blessings in disguise.

Whatever our aims or positions, we must seek the highest truth from the light of Allah. Considering these contrasts, do not be surprised or depressed. Men's immediate aims may be different. The duty of all is to seek the one true light.

فَأَمَّا مَن أَعْطَى وَاتَّقَى (٥)

5. So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah),

وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى (٦)

6. And (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best --

C6163. The good are distinguished here by three signs:

1. large-hearted sacrifices for Allah and men:
2. fear of Allah, which shows itself in righteous conduct for **Taqwa**, (see n. 26 to 2:2) includes just action as well as a mental state: and
3. truth and sincerity in recognising and supporting all that is morally beautiful, for **Husn** is the good as well as the beautiful.

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَى (٧)

7. We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss.

C6164. So far from there being any hardship in a good life, the righteous will enjoy their life more and more, and Allah will make their path smoother and smoother until they reach eventual Bliss.

وَأَمَّا مَن بَخِلَ وَاسْتَغْنَى (٨)

8. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient.

وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَى (٩)

9. And gives the lie to the Best --

C6165. The evil are distinguished here by three signs:

1. selfish greed and denial of other people's rights;

2. arrogance and self-sufficiency (96-7); and
3. knowingly dishonouring Truth out of spite, or seeing ugliness where there is beauty.

Such men's downward progress gathers momentum as they go, and their end can be nothing but Misery.

Where will be their boasted wealth and possessions, or their self-confidence?

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَى (١٠)

10. We will indeed make smooth for him the Path to Misery;

وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّى (١١)

11. Nor will his wealth profit him when he falls headlong (into the Pit).

C6166. Wealth amassed in this world will be of no use at the Day of Final Judgment, nor will any material advantages of this life bring profit by themselves in the Hereafter.

What will count will be a life of truth and righteousness, and of goodness to all the creatures of Allah.

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَى (١٢)

12. Verily We take upon Ourselves to guide.

C6167. Allah in His infinite mercy has provided full guidance to His creatures. All through His creation there are sign-posts indicating the right way.

To man He has given the five senses of perception, with mental and spiritual faculties for coordinating his physical perceptions and leading him higher and higher in thought and feeling.

He has besides sent inspired men as prophets for further teaching and guidance.

وَإِنَّ لَنَا لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَى (١٣)

13. And verily unto Us (belong) the End and the Beginning.

C6168. In the End man will return to Allah, and even from the beginning of man's life Allah's mercies and loving care surround him.

In the probationary period of man's life, he has a measure of free-will, and he is expected to use it in such a way as to bring his whole being into harmony with the universal Will and Law. For he will have to answer for the right use of his talents and opportunities.

If man's will has any meaning, he has the choice of accepting Allah's guidance or rejecting it, and in the latter case he must take the consequences. Hence the warning of the future "Fire" in the next verse.

فَأَنذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّى (١٤)

14. Therefore do I warn you of a Fire blazing fiercely;

لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَى (١٥)

15. None shall reach it but those most unfortunate ones,

C6169. The Fire of Punishment will not reach any except those who have deliberately sinned against their conscience and rejected Allah's Truth. The term used for them is "**Ashqa**" (superlative degree).

Cf. 87:11.

The corresponding idea in Christian theology is expressed in the following sentence. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matt. 12:31). (R).

الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (١٦)

16. Who give the lie to Truth and turn their backs.

وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْأَتْقَى (١٧)

17. But those most devoted to Allah shall be removed far from it --

C6170. "Those most devoted to Allah": the **Atqa**, the Allah-fearing men who live lives of purity, and seek only for the "Face of their Lord Most High".

See the verses following.

الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ ...

18. Those who spend their wealth...

C6171. The spending may be for charity, or for good works, such as advancing the cause of knowledge or science, or supporting ideals, etc.

"Wealth" must be understood not only for money or material goods, but also for any advantage or opportunity which a man happens to enjoy, and which he can place at the service of others.

يَتَزَكَّى (١٨) ...

... for increase in self-purification,

C6172. The Arabic root word **zaka** implies both increase and purification, and both meanings may be understood to be implied here.

Wealth (understood both literally and metaphorically) is not for selfish enjoyment or idle show. It is held on trust. It may be a trial in itself, from which a man who emerges successfully is a man all the purer in his life; and even if he was a good man before, his proper use of his wealth increases his position and dignity in the moral and spiritual world.

وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِندَهُ مِن نِّعْمَةٍ تُجْزَى (١٩)

19. And have in their minds no favor from anyone for which a reward is expected in return,

C6173. The good man does not give in charity or do his good deeds with the motive that he is returning someone else's favour and compensating and rewarding someone for some service done to him or expecting some reward in return for his own good deed: the sole motive in his mind is that he desires the Countenance or Good Pleasure of Allah Most High.

This "Countenance" or "Face" (Arabic, **Wajh**) implies good pleasure or approval; but it implies something more.

It also means the Cause,-either the "final cause" or the "efficient cause" of Aristotelian philosophy.

For the **Atqa** would refer everything, backwards in origin and forwards in destiny, to Allah. Allah is the source of their goodness, as well as its goal or purpose.

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاء وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى (٢٠)

20. But only the desire to seek for the countenance of their Lord Most High.

C6174. The definition of Righteousness, Charity, or Self-sacrifice, becomes thus highly spiritualised.

The **Atqa** are so completely identified with Allah's Will that everything else is blotted out to them. What would seem to be sacrifice from other points of view, becomes their own highest pleasure and satisfaction. Every virtuous man will have his own bliss, for there are degrees in virtue and bliss.

This supreme bliss is the portion-not the prize-of supreme virtue.

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى (٢١)

21. And soon will they attain (complete) satisfaction.

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ

And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Ad Duha

الضُّحَىٰ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is close in date to Surah 89 and Surah 92, and the imagery drawn from the contrast of Night and Day is common to all three. In this Surah the vicissitude of human life are referred to, and a message of hope and consolation is given to man's soul from Allah's past mercies, and he is bidden to pursue the path of goodness and proclaim the bounties of Allah. This is the general meaning.

In particular, the Surah seems to have been revealed in a dark period in the outer life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), when a man of less resolute will might have been discouraged.

But the Prophet (peace be upon him) is told to hold the present of less account than the glorious Hereafter which awaited him like the glorious morning after a night of stillness and gloom. The Hereafter was, not only in the Future Life, but his later life on this earth, full of victory and satisfaction.

C.273 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

What an example we have in the Prophet's life!
When moments of inspiration were still,
His soul yet felt the power of that stillness,
Like one who prays by night and waits
For the dawn, knowing how the light grows brighter
Every hour till noon, and well content
That night and morn and the hours succeeding
Are but steps to the plenary splendour of noon.
He was content and consoled in the thought that Allah
Had bestowed His loving care on him,
In the past, and so the future was sure.
He followed the Light Divine---to help
The helpless, to attend with patience to the call
Of those in need, and to rehearse and proclaim
And share the boundless Bounties of Allah!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالضُّحَىٰ (١)

1. By the Glorious Morning Light.

C6175. The full morning light of the sun, when his splendour shines forth in contrast with the night which has passed.

Cf. 91:1.

The growing hours of morning light, from sunrise to noon, are the true type of the growth of spiritual life and work, while the stillness of the night is, to those who know, only a preparation for it. We are not to imagine that the stillness or quiescence of the night is wasted, or means stagnation in our spiritual life. The stillness may seem lonely, but we are not alone, nor forsaken by Allah. Nor is such preparation, without immediate visible results, a sign of Allah's displeasure.

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَى (٢)

2. And by the Night when it is still --

C6176. Cf. 92:1-2. There Night is mentioned first, and Day second, to enforce the lesson of contrasts: the veil of the night naturally comes first before the splendour of daylight is revealed.

Here the argument is different: the growing hours of morning light are the main things and are mentioned first; while the hours of preparation and quiescence, which are subordinate, come second.

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ ...

3. The guardian-Lord Hath not forsaken thee,

C6177. As usual, there is the particular assurance to the Holy Prophet, and the general assurance to mankind: see the Introduction to this Surah.

The early years of the Prophet's ministry might well have seemed blank. After inspiration there were days and periods of waiting. A sense of loneliness might well have weighed on his mind. His own tribe of the Quraysh jeered at him, taunted and threatened him, and slandered and persecuted him as well as those who believe in him. But his faith was never shaken, not even to the extent of that cry of agony of Jesus: "My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?": (Mark, 15:34).

Much less did it enter the Prophet's mind to think that Allah was angry with him, as the taunts of his enemies suggested.

وَمَا قَلَى (٣) ...

Nor is He displeased.

C6178. See last note.

The more general meaning is similar.

To the man who prepares for spiritual work and spiritual growth the chief thing is typified by the growing hours of the morning. He should not be discouraged, nor overcome with a sense of loneliness in his early struggles or difficulties. The end will crown his work.

Allah's care is always around him. If unsympathetic or hostile critics laugh at him or taunt him with being, "mad" or "old- fashioned" or "ploughing his lonely furrow", his steady faith will uphold him. He will never believe that his earnest and sincere devotion to Allah, whatever be its results in this world, can be anything but pleasing to Allah.

وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَى (٤)

4. And verily the hereafter will be better for thee than the present.

C6179. To the truly devout man, each succeeding moment is better than the one preceding it.

In this sense the "hereafter" refers not only to the Future Life after death, but also to "the soul of goodness in things" in this very life. For even though some outward trappings of this shadow-world may be wanting, his soul is filled with more and more satisfaction as he goes on.

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَى (٥)

5. And soon will thy Guardian-Lord give thee (that wherewith) thou shalt be well-pleased.

C6180. Allah's good pleasure is sure when we serve Him. But we are assured that even our feelings of doubt and suffering will vanish, and we shall have a sense of complete satisfaction, contentment, and active pleasure when our will is identified with the Will of Allah.

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ ...

6. Did He not find thee...

C6181. Judge the future from the past. Allah has been good to you in your past experience: trust to His goodness in the future also. Again, there is a particular and a general meaning.

Three facts are taken from the holy Prophet's outer life by way of illustration. Metaphorically they also apply to us. And further, the outer facts are themselves types for the spiritual life.

See notes below.

... يَتِيمًا فَآوَى (٦)

... an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)?

C6182.

1. There is the case of the orphan, literally and figuratively.

   Our holy Prophet was himself an orphan. His father Abdullah died young before the child was born, leaving a little property. The Prophet's mother Amina was in ailing health, and he was chiefly brought up by his nurse Halima, His mother herself died when he was only six years old. His aged grandfather Abd al Muttalib treated him as his own son, but died two years later. Therefore his uncle Abu Talib treated him as his own son.

   He was thus an orphan in more senses than one, and yet the love he received from each one of these persons was greater than ordinary parental love.

   Each one of us is an orphan in some sense or another, and yet someone's love and shelter come to us by the grace of Allah.

   In the spiritual world there is no father or mother: our very first sustenance and shelter must come from the grace of Allah.

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ (٧)

7. And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance.

C6183.

2. The holy Prophet was born in the midst of the idolatry and polytheism of Makkah, in a family which was the custodian of this false worship. He wandered in quest of Unity and found it by the guidance of Allah.

   There is no implication whatever of sin or error on his part. But we may err and find ourselves wandering in mazes of error, in thought, motive, or understanding: we must pray for Allah's grace ever to give us guidance.

The Arabic root **dalla** has various shades of meaning.

- In 1:7, I have translated it by the verb "stray".
- In 53:2 the Prophet is defended from the charge of being "astray" or straying in mind.
- In 12:8 and 12:95 Jacob's sons use the word for their aged father, to suggest that he was senile and wandering in mind.
- In 32:10 it is used of the dead, and I have translated "hidden and lost" (in the earth).

وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ (٨)

8. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent.

C6184.

3. The holy Prophet inherited not much wealth and was poor. The true, pure, and sincere love of Khadija not only raised him above want, but made him independent of worldly needs in his later life, enabling him to devote his whole time to the service of Allah.

   So do we all find ourselves in some want or another, which, if we work whole- heartedly and sincerely is supplied to us by the grace of Allah.

When we have found the Way, it is a laborious task to climb up in our poverty of spiritual equipment: Allah will give us spiritual riches in love and knowledge.

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ (٩)

9. Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness,

C6185. Verses 9-11 carry on, to a step further, the triple argument of verses 6-8, as explained in the preceding notes.

The Prophet treated all orphans with tender affection and respect, setting an example to his contemporaries, who frequently took advantage of the helpless position of orphans, and in any case looked upon them as subordinate creatures to be repressed and kept in their place.

Such an attitude is common in all ages. Helpless creatures ought, on the contrary, to be treated as sacred trusts, whether they are orphans, or dependants, or creatures of any kind unable to assert themselves, either through age, sex, social rank, artificial conditions, or any cause whatever.

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ (١٠)

10. Nor repulse the petitioner (Unheard);

C6186. Then there are the people who come with petitions,-who have to ask for something. They may be genuine beggars asking for financial help, or ignorant people asking for knowledge, or timid people asking for some lead or encouragement. The common attitude is to scorn them or repulse them. The scorn may be shown even when aims or assistance is given to them. Such an attitude is wrong.

Charity is of no moral value without sympathy and love. Nor is it charity to give to idle sturdy professional beggars, for show or to get rid of them. They are mere parasites on society. Every petition should be examined and judged on its merits.

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ (١١)

11. But the Bounty of thy Lord Rehearse and proclaim!

C6187. Besides the petitioners, who ask for help, there is the case of those who do not ask but are nevertheless poor-poor but contented in worldly goods, or poor in knowledge or resources and not even knowing that they are poor.

If you are bountifully endowed by Allah, your duty is to make that Bounty spread far and wide. Proclaim it and share it, as the holy Prophet always did.

We all receive Allah's grace and guidance in some degree or other. We all owe it as a duty to our fellow-men to be kind and helpful to those less endowed in any respect than ourselves.



فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief: Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al-Sharh

الشرح

Introduction and Summary

This short Surah gives a message of hope and encouragement in a time of darkness and difficulty. It was revealed to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) soon after the last Surah *(Al Duha)*, whose argument it supplements.

C.274 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The Prophet's mind and heart had indeed

Been expanded and purified: the burden

Which pressed on his soul had been removed;
And his name exalted in this world and the next.
For the righteous man there is no trouble
But is linked with ease and joy; he must strive
At every stage, and look to Allah
Alone as the goal of all his hopes.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ (١)

1. Have We not expanded thee thy breast?

C6188. Cf. the prayer of Moses in 20:25.

The breast is symbolically the scat of knowledge and the highest feelings of love and affection, the treasure-house in which are stored the jewels of that quality of human character which approaches nearest to the divine.

The Holy Prophet's human nature had been purified, expanded, and elevated, so that he became a Mercy to all Creation. Such a nature could afford to ignore the lower motives of ordinary humanity which caused shameful attacks to be made on him.

Its strength and courage could also bear the burden of the galling work which it had to do in denouncing sin, subduing it, and protecting Allah's creatures from its oppression.

وَوَضَعْنَا عَنكَ وِزْرَكَ (٢)

2. And removed from thee thy burden

C6189. See last note.

It is indeed a grievous and galling burden for a man to fight single-handed against sin. But Allah sends His grace and aid, and that burden is removed, or converted into joy and triumph in the service of the One True God.

الَّذِي أَنقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ (٣)

3. The which did gall thy back? --

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ (٤)

4. And raised high the esteem (in which) thou (art held)? --

C6190. The Prophet's virtues, the magnanimity of his character, and his love for mankind were fully recognised even in his lifetime, and his name stands highest among the heroic leaders of mankind.

The phrase used here is more comprehensive in meaning than that used for various prophets in 37:119 etc;

"We left this blessing for them among generations to come in later times".

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا (٥)

5. So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief:

C6191. This verse is repeated for extra emphasis.

Whatever difficulties or troubles are encountered by men, Allah always provides a solution, a way out, a relief, a way to lead to ease and happiness, if we only follow His Path and show our Faith by patience and well-doing.

The solution or relief does not merely come after the Difficulty: it is provided with it.

I understand the definite article in **al-usr** in a generic sense, and translate: "every difficulty".

In 92:7, 1 have translated **Yusr** as Bliss, and

in 92:10 **'Usr** as Misery.

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا (٦)

6. Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ (٧)

7. Therefore, when thou art free (from thine immediate task), still labor hard,

C6192. When thou art free: or when thou art relieved,

The words understood may be: from thy immediate task, that of preaching to men, denouncing sin, and encouraging righteousness; or, from the difficulties that confronted thee. When that happens, that does not finish the labours of the man of Allah. It is only one step to them. He has constantly and insistently to go on. When there is rest from the task of instructing the world, the contact with the spiritual kingdom continues, and indeed it becomes more intimate and concentrated.

وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ (٨)

8. And to thy Lord turn (all) thy attention.

C6193. The kingdom of Allah is everything. Other things are incidental, and really do not matter.

Worldly greatness or success may be a means to an end, but it may also be a hindrance to true spiritual greatness. Allah is the goal of the righteous man's whole attention and desire.



لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

We have indeed created man in the best of molds, Then do We abase him (to be) the lowest of the low --

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

At Tin

اَلتِّين

Introduction and Summary

This is also a very early Surah It appeals to the most sacred symbols to show that Allah created man in the best of moulds, but that man is capable of the utmost degradation unless he has Faith and leads a good life. In subject matter this Surah closely resembles Surah 105.

C.275 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Nature and history and the Light of Revelation,
Through the ages, show that man,
Created by Allah in the best of moulds,
Can yet fall to the lowest depths, unless
He lives a life of faith and righteousness.
Then will he reach his goal: if not,
He must stand his Judgement---none can doubt---
Before the wisest and justest of Judges.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالتِّين ...

1. By the Fig,

C6194. The substantive proposition is in verses 4-8, and it is clinched by an appeal to four sacred symbols, viz.,

- the Fig,
- the Olive,
- Mount Sinai, and
- the sacred City of Makkah.

About the precise interpretation of the first two symbols, and especially of the symbol of the Fig, there is much difference of opinion.

If we take the Fig literally to refer to the fruit or the tree, it can stand as a symbol of man's destiny in many ways. Under cultivation it can be one of the finest, most delicious, and most wholesome fruits in existence: in its wild state, it is nothing but tiny seeds, and is insipid, and often full of worms and maggots.

So man at his best has a noble destiny: at his worst, he is "the lowest of the low".

Christ is said to have cursed a fig tree for having only leaves, and not producing fruit (Matt. 21:18-21), enforcing the same lesson.

There is also a parable of the fig tree in Matt. 24:32-35.

See also the parable of the good and evil figs in Jeremiah, 24:1-10.

But see n. 6198 below.

وَالزَّيْتُونِ (١) ...

and the Olive,

C6195. For the sacred symbolism of the Olive, see n. 2880 to 23:20, and notes 3000- 3002 to 24:35, where the parable of Allah's Light includes a reference to the Olive.

But it is possible that the Olive here refers to the Mount of Olives, just outside the walls of the City of Jerusalem (see n. 5038 to 52:2), for this is the scene in the Gospel story (Matt. 24:3-4) of Christ's description of the Judgment to come.

وَطُورِ سِينِينَ (٢)

2. And the Mount of Sinai,

C6196. This was the Mountain on which the Law was given to Moses.

See 19:52, and n. 2504.

The Law was given, and the glory of Allah was made visible. But did Israel faithfully obey the Law thereafter?

وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ (٣)

3. And this City of security --

C6197. "**This City of security**" is undoubtedly Makkah. Even in Pagan times its sacred character was respected, and no fighting was allowed in its territory. But the same

City, with all its sacred associations, persecuted the greatest of the Prophets and gave itself up for a time to idolatry and sin, thus presenting the contrast of the best and the worst.

C6198. Having discussed the four symbols in detail, let us consider them together. It is clear that they refer to Allah's Light or Revelation, which offers man the highest destiny if he will follow the Way. Makkah stands for Islam, Sinai for Israel, and the Mount of Olives for Christ's original and pure Message.

It has been suggested that the Fig stands for the *Ficus Indica*, the Bo-tree, under which Gautama Buddha obtained Nirvana. I hesitate to adopt the suggestion, but if accepted it would cover pristine Buddhism and the ancient Vedic religion from which it was an offshoot. In this way all the great religions of the world would be indicated. But even if we refer the Fig and the Olive to the symbolism in their fruit, and not to any particular religion, the contrast of Best and Worst in man's destiny remains, and that is the main thing.

This raises a doctrinal question of considerable importance: how does Islam view the ancient Vedic religions and Buddhism, or for that matter, any other religion? As Muslims we are not in a position to affirm whether Buddha was a prophet or not. Although the Quran states that Allah sent Prophets to every people, 10:47, 16:36, it does not mention the names of all of them. In fact it mentions by name relatively few of the Prophets of the Semitic tradition, or only much as with whom its first audience, the Arabs were generally familiar. As to its present form, we find the doctrines of Buddhism clearly at variance with monotheism and cardinal Principles of the True Religion as explained in the Quran. This may have been the result of distortion or loss by the followers of its original teachings.

As a general rule, we cannot describe anyone as a Prophet or Messenger of Allah unless explicitly mentioned in the Quran, or Hadith. The Message as brought by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) preserves in itself all that was essential in the earlier revelations or scriptures: it abrogates all the previous messages sent through earlier Prophets (3:85). (R)

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (٤)

4. We have indeed created man in the best of molds,

C6199. Taqwim: mould, symmetry, form, nature, constitution. There is no fault in Allah's creation. To man Allah gave the purest and best nature, and man's duty is to preserve the pattern on which Allah has made him: 30:30.

But by making him vicegerent, Allah exalted him in posse even higher than the angels, for the angels had to make obeisance to him (2:30-34, and n. 48). But man's position as vicegerent also gives him will and discretion, and if he uses them wrongly he falls even lower than the beasts.

See next note.

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ (٥)

5. Then do We abase him (to be) the lowest of the low --

C6200. This verse should be read with the next.

If man rebels against Allah, and follows after evil, he will be abased to the lowest possible position. For Judgment is sure.

Those who use their faculties aright and follow Allah's Law will reach the high and noble destiny intended for them. That reward will not be temporary, but unfailing.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (٦)

6. Except such as believe and do righteous deeds:

for they shall have a reward unfailing.

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالدِّينِ (٧)

7. Then what can, after this, contradict thee; as to the Judgment (to come)?

C6201. Thee: may refer to the holy Prophet or to man collectively.

After this: i.e., when it is clearly shown to you that Allah created man true and pure, that He guides him, and that those who rebel and break His law will be punished and brought down in the Hereafter, who can doubt this, or contradict the Prophet when he gives warning?

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمِ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٨)

8. Is not Allah the wisest of Judges?

C6202. Allah is wise and just. Therefore the righteous have nothing to fear, but the evil ones cannot escape punishment.



كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَيَطْغَى أَن رَّآهُ اسْتَغْنَى

Nay! Verily, man does transgress all bounds (in disbelief and evil deed, etc.). Because he considers himself self-sufficient.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Iqra

اقْرَأْ

Introduction and Summary

Verses 1-5 of this Surah were the first direct Revelation to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The circumstances, material and psychical, in which they came, are described in C. 28-30, which should be referred to.

After that there was an interval or break (*Fatrah*), extending over some months or perhaps over a year. Surah 68 is usually considered to have been the next revelation in point of time. But the remainder of this Surah (96:6-19) came soon after the *Fatrah*, and that portion is joined on to the first five verses

containing the command to preach, because it explains the chief obstacle to the delivery of the message to man, *viz*, man's own obstinacy, vanity, and insolence.

C.276 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Noble is the mission of Prophet, selected
To proclaim the Message of Allah, the Lord
And Cherisher of all His Creation, Whose measureless
Bounties include the instruction of man
In new and ever new knowledge. But alas
For man! he fancies himself self-sufficient,
Turns away from the Path, and misleads others,
But nothing is hidden from Allah. He will bring
All untruth and sin and rebellion to Judgement,
And subdue all evil. The righteous bow
In adoration to Allah, and draw closer to Him.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اقْرَأْ ...

1. Proclaim! (or Read!)

C6203. Iqraa may mean;

"read", or

"recite or rehearse", or

"proclaim aloud",

the object understood being Allah's Message.

In worldly letters he was unversed, but with spiritual knowledge his mind and soul were filled, and now had come the time when he must stand forth to the world and declare his mission.

... بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١)

in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created -

-

C6204. The declaration or proclamation was to be in the name of Allah the Creator. It was not for any personal benefit to the Prophet: to him there was to come bitter persecution, sorrow, and suffering. It was the call of Allah for the benefit of erring humanity.

Allah is mentioned by his title of "thy Lord and Cherisher", to establish a direct nexus between the source of the Message and the one addressed. The Message was not merely an abstract proposition of philosophy, but the direct concrete message of a personal Allah to the creatures whom He loves and cherishes.

"**Thy**" addressed to the Prophet is appropriate in two ways:

1. he was in direct contact with the divine Messenger (Gabriel) and Him Who sent the Messenger;
2. he represented the whole of humanity, in a fuller sense than that in which Christ Jesus is the "Son of Man".

خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢)

2. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood:

C6205. Cf. 23:14,

The lowly origin of the animal in man is contrasted with the high destiny offered to him in his intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature by his "most bountiful" Creator. No knowledge is withheld from man.

On the contrary, through the faculties freely given to him, he acquires it in such measure as outstrips his immediate understanding, and leads him ever to strive for newer and newer meaning.

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (٣)

3. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful --

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤)

4. He Who taught (the use of) the Pen --

C6206. The symbol of a permanent revelation is the mystic Pen and the mystic Record.

See n. 5593 to 68:1.

The Arabic words for "teach" and "knowledge" are from the same root. It is impossible to produce in a Translation the complete orchestral harmony of the words for "read", "teach", "pen" (which implies reading, writing, books, study, research), "knowledge" (including science, self knowledge, spiritual understanding), and "proclaim", an alternative meaning of the word for "to read".

This proclaiming or reading implies not only the duty of blazoning forth Allah's message, as going, with the prophetic office, but also the duty of promulgation and wide dissemination of the Truth by all who read and understand it.

The comprehensive meaning of **qara'** refers not only to a particular person and occasion but also gives a universal direction. And this kind of comprehensive meaning, as we have seen, runs throughout the Quran -for those, who will understand.

عَلَّمَ الْإِنسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٥)

5. Taught man that which he knew not.

C6207. Allah teaches us new knowledge at every given moment. Individuals learn more and more day by day; nations and humanity at large learn fresh knowledge at every stage.

This is even more noticeable and important in the spiritual world.

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَيَطْغَى (٦)

6. Nay, but man doth transgress all bounds,

C6208. All our knowledge and capacities come as gifts from Allah. But man, in his inordinate vanity and insolence, mistakes Allah's gifts for his own achievements.

The gifts may be strength or beauty, wealth, position, or power, or the more subtle gifts of knowledge or talents in individuals-or Science, or Art, or Government, or Organisation for mankind in general.

أَن رَّآهُ اسْتَغْنَى (٧)

7. In that he looketh upon himself as self-sufficient.

إِنَّ إِلَى رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَى (٨)

8. Verily, to thy Lord is the return (of all).

C6209. Man is not self-sufficient, either as an individual, or in his collective capacity. If he arrogates Allah's gifts to himself, he is reminded-backwards, of his lowly physical origin (from a drop of animal matter), and forwards, of his responsibility and final return to Allah.

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى (٩)

9. Seest thou one who forbids.

C6210. The words, may be applied generally to perverse humanity, which seeks not only to rebel against Allah's Law, but also to prevent others from following it.

There may however be a reference here to Abu Jahl, an inveterate enemy of Islam, who used in its early days to insult and persecute the holy Prophet and those who followed his teaching.

He used, in particular, to use shameful methods to prevent the Prophet from going to the Ka'bah for devotions, and forbid any who came under his influence, from offering prayers or performing devotions.

He was arrogant and purse-proud and met his end in the battle of Badr.

عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى (١٠)

10. A votary when he (turns) to pray?

أَرَأَيْتَ إِن كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَى (١١)

11. Seest thou if He is on (the road of) Guidance? --

C6211. Man's insolence leads to two results:

1. self-destruction through self- misleading;
2. a false example or false guidance to others.

The righteous man must therefore test human example or human guidance by the question,

"Is there Allah's guidance behind it?"

And visible light would be thrown on it by the question.

"Does it lead to righteousness?"

A flouting of Allah and Allah's truth answers the first question in the negative, and conduct which turns back from the eternal principles of Right answers the second.

أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَى (١٢)

12. Or enjoins Righteousness?

أَرَأَيْتَ إِن كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (١٣)

13. **Seest thou if he** denies (Truth) and turns away?

C6212. The usual trick of the ungodly is to refuse to face Truth. If they are placed in a comer, they deny what is obvious to reasonable men, and turn their backs.

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَى (١٤)

14. Knoweth he not that Allah doth see?

كَلَّا لَئِن لَّمْ يَنتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ (١٥)

15. Let him beware! If he desist not, We will drag him by the forelock –

C6213. Cf. 11:56, and n. 1551.

The forelock is on the forehead, and is thus symbolical of the summit and crown of the man's power or dignity. To be dragged by it is to suffer the lowest dregs of humiliation.

Nasfa'an is a syncopated form of the emphatic first person plural.

نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ (١٦)

16. A lying, sinful forelock!

فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَه (١٧)

17. Then, let him call (for help) to his council (of comrades):

C6214. The Pagan Quraysh, who formed an oppressive junta or council to manage the Ka'bah were in sympathy with Abu Jahl, though they did not go to the unbridled lengths to which Abu Jahl went.

But they could not, all combined, resist the onward march of the divine mission, though they did all they could to check it.

سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ (١٨)

18. We will call on the angels of punishment (to deal with him)!

C6215. All the combined forces of evil, though they may have worldly appearances in their favour, and though they may seem to be successful for a time, cannot stand against Allah.

He has but to command His forces of punishment to exert themselves, and they will subdue evil, protect Allah's votaries and justify the faith for which the votaries suffer.

كَلَّا لَا تُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ (١٩)

19. Nay, heed him not: but bow down in adoration, and bring thyself the closer (to Allah)!

C6216. The righteous man has no fear. He can disregard all the forces of evil that are brought against him.

But he must learn humility: that is his defence. He will bow down in adoration to Allah. He must have the will to bring himself closer to Allah. For Allah is always close to him,-closer to him than his life blood in the jugular vein (50:16).

Man's humility and adoration remove him from being an insolent rebel on the one hand and, on the other, prepare his will to realise his nearness to Allah.



إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ

Verily! We have sent it (this Qur'ân) down in the night of Al-Qadr (Decree).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Qadr

الْقَدْرِ

Introduction and Summary

The chronology of this Surah has no significance. It is probably Makkan, though some hold that it was revealed in Madinah.

The subject matter is the mystic Night of Power (or Honour), in which revelation comes down to a benighted world---it may be to the wonderful Cosmos of an individual---and transforms the conflict of wrongdoing into Peace and Harmony---through the agency of the angelic host, representing the spiritual powers of the Mercy of Allah.

C.277 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Blessed indeed is the Night of Power!---
When the Mercy of Allah's Revelation breaks through
The darkness of the human soul!
All the Powers, of the world divine,
Speed on their mystic Message of Mercy,
By Allah's command, and bless every nook
And corner of the heart! All jars
Are stilled in the reign supreme of Peace.
Until this mortal night gives place
To the glorious day of an immoral world!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (١)

1. We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the night of Power:

C6217. Cf. 44::3 and n. 4690.

The 23rd, 25th or 27th night of Ramadan, as well as other nights, have been suggested as the Night of Power. See, however, the Introduction to this Surah.

It is best to take this in conjunction with verse 3 below, which says that the Night of Power is better than a thousand Months.

It transcends Time: for it is Allah's Power dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance, by his Revelation, in every kind of affair. (R).

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ (٢)

2. And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is?

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ (٣)

3. The Night of Power is better than a thousand Months.

C6218. "**A thousand**" must be taken in an indefinite sense; as denoting a very long period of time.

Cf. notes 3632 and 3634 to 32:4-5, and n. 5678 to 70:4.

This does not refer to our ideas of time, but to "timeless Time".

One moment of enlightenment under Allah's Light is better than thousands of months or years of animal life, and such a moment converts the night of darkness into a period of spiritual glory.

تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمْرٍ (٤)

4. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand:

C6219. The Spirit: usually understood to be the angel Gabriel. (R).

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ (٥)

5. Peace! This until the rise of Morn!

C6220. When the Night of spiritual darkness is dissipated by the glory of Allah, a wonderful Peace and a sense of Security arise in the soul. And this lasts on until this life closes, and the glorious Day of the new world dawns, when everything will be on a different plane, and the chequered nights and days of this world will be even less than a dream.

The Absolute Reality

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

And they have been commanded no more than this: to worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Bayyinah

الْبَيِّنَةُ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah was probably an early Madinah Surah, or possibly a later Makkan Surah.

In subject matter it carries forward the argument of the last Surah. The mystic night of revelation is indeed blessed: but those who reject Truth are impervious to Allah's Message, however clear may be the evidence in support of it.

C.278 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

But those who reject the light of Truth
Are obstinate. Why should they persist
In evil ways when the Clear Evidence
Has come before? The straight Religion
Is simple: to adore with a pure heart
The God `of Truth, to draw nigh to Him
In Prayer sincere, and to serve
Our fellow-creatures in charity and love.
To do aught else is to fall from Grace.
But Faith and Good Life lead straight to the Goal---
The beauteous Gardens of Bliss Eternal,
And the mutual good pleasure of the Soul in her Lord.



لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ...

1. Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book,

C6221. The People of the Book immediately referred to are the Jews and the Christians, who had received scriptures in the same line of prophecy in which came our holy Prophet. Their scriptures should have prepared them for the advent of the greatest and last of the Prophets. For the Jewish scriptures promised to the Jews, cousins or brethren to the Arabs, a prophet like Moses:

"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut, 18:15).

And Christ promised a Comforter (John. 14:16; 15:26; and 16:7;

see my n. 5438 to 56:6) almost by name.

The People of the Book fell from the true, straight, and standard religion, into devious ways, and would not come to the true Path until (they said) they were convinced by the arrival of the promised Prophet. But when the promised Prophet came in the person of Muhammad, they rejected him, because they really did not seek for Truth but only followed their own fancies and desires.

... وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ مُنفَكِّينَ ...

and among the Polytheists, were not going to depart (from their ways)

C6222. The Polytheists, the Pagans, had not previously believed in any scriptures. But yet, when clear evidence came to them, they should have believed. Yet they rejected the holy Prophet because they were not really searching for Truth, but were only following their own fancies and desires.

...حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ (١)

until there should come to them Clear Evidence --

C6223. The Clear Evidence was the holy Prophet himself, his life, his personality, and his teaching.

رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً (٢)

2. A messenger from Allah, rehearsing **scriptures** kept **pure and holy**:

C6224. Cf. 2:151.

C6225. Cf. 80:13-16.

فِيهَا كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ (٣)

3. Wherein are laws (or decrees) right and straight.

C6226. Qayyimah: straight, as opposed to crooked; standard as opposed to irregular; definite and permanent, as opposed to casual or temporary.

Cf. Cf. 9:6; 12:40; etc.

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ (٤)

4. Nor did the People of the Book make schisms, until after there came to them Clear Evidence.

C6227. The responsibility of the People of the Book is greater than that of Pagans, because the People of the Book had been prepared for the standard and straight Religion by the revelations which they had already received. Yet, when the clear evidence came in Islam, they resisted it.

And what is this standard and straight Religion, free of all ambiguity, and free of all casual rights and ceremonies?

They are summed up in three eternal principles, as explained in the next verse and the next note.

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا ...

5. And they have been commanded no more than this:

C6228. The three eternal principles of Religion are:

1. sincere devotion to Allah;
2. Prayer and Praise as drawing man nearer to Allah; and
3. the service of Allah's creatures by deeds of practical charity.

... لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاء...

- to worship Allah,
- offering Him sincere devotion,
- being True (in faith);

C6229. Hanif: See n. 134 to 2:135.

... وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ (٥)

- to establish regular Prayer;
- and to practice regular Charity;

and that is the Religion **Right and Straight.**

C6230. See n. 6226 above.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ...

6. Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, will be in Hell-fire, to dwell therein (for aye).

C6231. To be given the faculty of discrimination between right and wrong, and then to reject truth and right, is the worst folly which a creature endowed with will can commit.

It must necessarily bring its own punishment, whether the creature calls himself one of the children of Abraham or one of the redeemed of Christ, or whether he goes by the mere light of nature and reason as a Pagan. Honour in the sight of Allah is not due to race or colour, but to sincere and righteous conduct (49:13).

...أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ (٦)

They are the worst of creatures.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ (٧)

7. Those who have faith and do righteous deeds -- they are the best of creatures.

C6232. Contrast this with the preceding verse. Human beings who live a life of faith and good deed justify the purpose of their probation here. They attain the fulfilment of their highest hopes. (R).

جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ...

8. Their reward is with Allah: Gardens of Eternity, Beneath which rivers flow;

... خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا...

They will dwell therein for ever;

... رَّضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ...

Allah well pleased with them, and they with Him:

C6233. The Good Pleasure of Allah is the final Bliss of Salvation.

The good pleasure is mutual; the truly saved is he whose will has become completely identified with Allah's universal will. (R).

ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ (٨) ...

all this for such as fear their Lord and Cherisher.

C6234. The fear of Allah is the fear to offend against His holy law, the fear to do anything which is against His holy Will.

Such fear is akin to love; for with it dawns the consciousness of Allah's loving-care for all His creatures.

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ

So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Zalzalah

الزلزال

Introduction and Summary

This Surah is is close in date to the last: it is generally referred to the early Madinah period, though it may possibly be of the late Makkan period.

It refers to the tremendous convulsion and uprooting which will take place when the present order of the world is dissolved and the new spiritual world of Justice and Truth takes its place. The symbol used is that of an earthquake which will shake our present material and phenomenal world to its very foundations. The mystic words in which the earthquake is described are

remarkable for both power and graphic aptness. With the shaking all hidden mysteries will be brought to light.

C.279 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The Hour of Judgement must needs be heralded
By a mighty Convulsion: the Earth will give up
Her secrets and tell her tale of all
Man's doings: men will march in companies
And clearly see the inwardness
Of all their Deeds: not an atom of Good
Or Evil done, but will be shown
In the final Account of men convinced.



إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا (١)

1. When the Earth is shaken to her (utmost) convulsion,

C6235. To the ordinary human observer a violent earthquake is a terrifying phenomenon, in its suddenness, in its origin, and in its power to destroy and uproot the strongest buildings and to bring up strange materials from the bowels of the earth.

The Overwhelming Event (Surah 88) which ushers in the Judgment will be a bigger and more far-reaching convulsion than any earthquakes that we know. And yet the incidents of earthquakes may give us some idea of that supreme world-shaking Event.

وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا (٢)

2. And the Earth throws up her burden (from within),

C6236. An earthquake, if accompanied by a volcanic eruption, throws up enormous boulders and lava from beneath the crust of the earth. They are thrown up as if they were a burden to the Earth personified. They may be all kinds of minerals, or treasures buried for secrecy.

So in the great and final Convulsion, the dead who had been buried and forgotten will rise; and will be brought to the light of day, and justice will be done in the full glare of absolute Truth.

وَقَالَ الْإِنسَانُ مَا لَهَا (٣)

3. And man cries (distressed): 'What is the matter with her?' --

C6237. The puzzled agony suffered by the victims of violent earthquakes is as nothing compared to the experience of the new and wonderful world which will then open out of the gaze of man.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا (٤)

4. On that Day will she declare her tidings:

بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَى لَهَا (٥)

5. For that thy Lord will have given her inspiration.

C6238. The present order may be personified as the earth. It will pass away, but the Deeds done therein, even the most secret, will be brought to the full light of day. And this will be because Allah will give the Command, the inspiration or Word, by which alone all events do proceed.

The "**inspiration**" is the Command or direction conveyed by instruction breathed into the Earth personified: she is directed to tell the whole story of what she knows.

Cf. 16:68, n. 2097.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٦)

6. On that Day will men proceed in companies **sorted out,** to be shown the Deeds that they (had done).

C6239. In this world good and evil are mixed together. But then they will be sorted out, and each grade of good and evil will be sorted out. So they will proceed in companies to receive judgment. And they will be shown the exact import of everything that they had thought, said, or done, in this life of probation, however they may have concealed or misinterpreted it in this life.

Everything will be considered in taking the account, and the account will convince the persons concerned themselves.

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ (٧)

7. Then shall anyone who has done **an atom's weight** of good, see it!

C6240. Dharrah: the weight of an atom, the smallest living weight an ordinary man can think of.

Figuratively the subtlest form of good and evil will then be brought to account, and it will be done openly and convincingly: he "shall see it".

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (٨)

8. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.

The Absolute Reality

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ وَإِنَّهُ عَلَى ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ

Truly Man is to his Lord, ungrateful; And to that (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds);

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Adiyat

الْعَادِيَاتِ

Introduction and Summary

This is one of the earlier Makkan Surahs. In the depth of its mystery and the rhythm and sublimity of its language and symbolism, it may be compared with S.79. Its subject matter is the irresistible nature of spiritual power and knowledge, contrasted with unregenerate man's ingratitude, pettiness, helplessness, and ignorance.

C.280 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

There are those that fight, with eager charge,

The hosts of evil, and storm its citadel.

But unregenerate Man shows less

Than gratitude for Allah's most gracious

Bounties: his life bears witness to his treason

And his greed. Allah's knowledge is all-embracing:

All things hidden will be laid bare as Judgement.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا (١)

1. **By the** (Steeds) that run, with panting (breath),

C6241. The substantive proposition is in verses 6-8 below, and the metaphors enforcing the lesson are in verses 1-5 here. They have at least three layers of meaning:

1. Look at the chargers (mares or swift camels) panting for war on behalf of their masters. Off they go, striking fire with their hoofs by night at the behest of their riders; they push home the charge in the morning, chivalrously giving the enemy the benefit of daylight; and regardless of flashing steel or the weapons of their enemies they boldly penetrate into the midst of their foe, risking their lives for the Cause. Does unregenerate man show that fidelity to his Lord Allah?

   On the contrary he is ungrateful to Allah; he shows that by his deeds; he is violently in love with wealth and gain and things that perish.

2. By the figure of metonymy the brave fidelity of the war-horse may stand for that of the brave men and

true who rally to the standard of Allah and carry it to victory, contrasted with the poltroonery and pettiness of unregenerate man.

3. The whole conflict, fighting, and victory, may be applied to spiritual warfare against those who are caught and overwhelmed in the camp of Evil.

فَالْمُورِيَاتِ قَدْحًا (٢)

2. And strike sparks of Fire,

C6242. With their hoofs. If we suppose the march to be in the dead of night, the sparks of fire would be still more conspicuous.

فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا (٣)

3. And push home the charge in the morning,

C6243. We may suppose a surprise attack, but yet a chivalrous attack by daylight. The foe is punished through his own lethargy and unpreparedness, apart from the strength, fire, and spirit of the forces of righteousness.

فَأَثَرْنَ بِهِ نَقْعًا (٤)

4. And raise the dust in clouds the while,

C6244. The clouds of dust typify the ignorance and confusion in the minds of those who oppose Truth.

فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا (٥)

5. And penetrate forthwith into the midst (of the foe) en masse --

C6245. The forces of evil mass themselves for strength, but their massing itself may become a means of their speedy undoing.

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ (٦)

6. Truly Man is **to his Lord**, ungrateful;

C6246. Man, i.e., unregenerate man, in contrast to those who receive guidance and wage unceasing war with Evil, is ungrateful to his Lord and Cherisher, Him Who created him and sustains him, and sends His blessings and favours at all times.

The ingratitude may be shown by thoughts, words, and deeds, -by forgetting or denying Allah and His goodness, by misusing His gifts, or by injustice to His creatures.

وَإِنَّهُ عَلَى ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ (٧)

7. And to that (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds);

C6247. Man himself, by his conduct, proves the charge of treason against himself.

وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ (٨)

8. And violent is he in his love of wealth.

C6248. What an evil choice he makes in committing treason against his own Benefactor by going after the petty baubles of this world's wealth of fleeting gains?

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ (٩)

9. Does he not know -- when that which is in the graves is Scattered abroad,

C6249. Dead bodies, secret plots, evil thoughts and imaginings, long since buried, will yet stand forth before the Judgment-seat of Allah.

Instead of being closely hidden or blotted out -as they will have been from the consciousness of mankind,- they will stand out as from the consciousness of Allah, which is all-embracing and never suffers from sleep or fatigue.

وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ (١٠)

10. And that which is (locked up) in (human) breasts is made manifest --

إِنَّ رَبَّهُم بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيرٌ (١١)

11. That their Lord had been well-acquainted with them, (even to) that Day?

C6250. Allah's knowledge is full and vigilant at all times. But on that day it will reveal to men secrets which they had long forgotten, for the Book of their Deeds will be made manifest at Judgment.



The Absolute Reality

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنفُوشِ

It is a Day whereon mankind will be like moths scattered about,
And the mountains will be like carded wool,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Qariyah

القَارِعَة

Introduction and Summary

This Makkan Surah describes the Judgment Day as the Day of Clamour, when men will be distracted and the landmarks of this world will be lost, but every deed will be weighed in a just balance, and find its real value and setting.

C.281 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

How will the senses of man stand the Noise
And Clamour of the great Day of Account,

Whereon this life's old landmarks will vanish,
And men will be helpless like scattered moths?
Nay, but a Balance of Justice will weigh
And appraise all Deeds: and those whose good
Will show substance and weight will achieve a Life
Of good pleasure and satisfaction, while those
Whose good will be light will find themselves,
Alas, in a blazing Pit of Punishment.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْقَارِعَةُ (١)

1. The (Day) of Noise and Clamor:

   C6251. The Day of Noise and Clamour is the Day of Judgment, when the whole of the present order of things will be overthrown with a tremendous convulsion.

   Cf. n. 6235 to 99:1, and n. 6096 to 88:1.

   All our present landmarks will be lost. It will be a stunning experience to begin with, but it will inaugurate a new world of true and permanent values, in which every human deed will have its true and just consequences, as if weighed in the balance.

   See verses 6-11 below.

مَا الْقَارِعَةُ (٢)

2. What is the (Day) of Noise and Clamor?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ (٣)

3. And what will explain to thee what the (Day) of Noise and Clamor is?

يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ (٤)

4. (It is) a Day whereon Men will be like moths Scattered about,

C6252. Moths are frail light things. To see them scattered about in a violent storm gives some idea of the confusion, distress, and helplessness in which men will be at first overwhelmed on the Day of Account.

Old memories will be like a book almost blotted out. New hopes will be vague in a new world just rising on the horizon. But it will be a perfectly just world, and no good action will be lost and no evil one but will have its compensating value estimated.

وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنفُوشِ (٥)

5. And the mountains will be like carded wool.

C6253. Cf. n. 5682 to 70:9.

The mountains are solid things, which seem as if nothing could move them. But in that tremendous cataclysm they will be scattered about like flakes of leased or carded wool.

This is a metaphor to show that what we consider very substantial in this life will be as an airy nothing in the next world.

فَأَمَّا مَن ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ (٦)

6. Then, he whose **balance** (of good deeds) will be (found) heavy,

C6254. The Good Deeds will be weighed and appraised. This appraisement will be of the nicest and justest kind: for it will take into account motives, temptations, provocations, surrounding conditions, antecedents, subsequent amends, and all possible connected circumstances.

Against them, presumably, will be deeds of the opposite kind, appraised in the same way.

If the good predominates, the judgment will be in the man's favour, and he will be ushered into a fife of good

pleasure and satisfaction. This will of course be on another plane. (R).

فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ (٧)

7. Will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction.

C6255. Cf. 98:8, and n. 6233, but perhaps the Bliss is not of the same grade for all men.

In every case it is bliss, but bliss suited to the particular nature of the individual concerned.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ (٨)

8. But he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light -

فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ (٩)

9. Will have his home in a (bottomless) pit.

C6256. Just as grades of bliss are indicated for the righteous, so apparently we are to understand grades of punishment suited to the sins of the individual sinners concerned.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَهْ (١٠)

10. And what will explain to thee what this is?

نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ (١١)

11. (It is) a Fire Blazing fiercely!

أَلْهَاكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ

The mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things of this world) diverts you (from the more serious things), Until ye visit the graves.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Takathur

التَّكَاثُرُ

Introduction and Summary

This probably early Makkan Surah gives a warning against acquisitiveness, i.e. the passion for piling up quantities or numbers, whether in the good things of this world, or in manpower or in other forms of megalomania, which leave no time or opportunity for pursuing the higher things of life.

C.282 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Be not engrossed in things ephemeral,

To the neglect of higher things in life.

Life is but short, and Death will soon claim you.
Oh that men would only learn,
Before it is too late, the serious
Issues of the higher life! They must
Taste the consequences of their neglect..
For every good enjoyed they must
In the Hereafter give a strict account..

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلْهَاكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ (١)

1. The mutual rivalry for piling up (the good things of this world) **diverts you** (from the more serious things),

C6257. Acquisitiveness, that is, the passion for seeking an increase in wealth, position, the number of adherents or followers or supporters, mass production and mass organisation, may affect an individual as such, or it may affect whole societies or nations. Other people's example or rivalry in such things may aggravate the situation.

Up to a certain point it may be good and necessary. But when it becomes inordinate and monopolises attention, it leaves no time for higher things in life, and a clear warning is here sounded from a moral point of view.

Man may be engrossed in these things till death approaches, and he looks back on a wasted life, as far as the higher things are concerned.

حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ (٢)

2. Until ye visit the graves.

C6258. That is, until the time comes when you must lie down in the graves and leave and pomp and circumstance of an empty life.

The true Reality will then appear before you. Why not try to strive for a little understanding of that Reality in this very life?

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣)

3. But nay, ye soon shall know (the reality).

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤)

4. Again, ye soon shall know!

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ (٥)

5. Nay, were ye to know **with certainty of mind**, (Ye would beware!)

C6259. Three kinds of **yaqin** (certainty of knowledge) are described in n. 5673 to 69:51.

The first is certainty of mind or inference mentioned here: we hear from someone, or we infer from something we know: this refers to our own state of mind.

If we instruct our minds in this way, we should value the deeper things of life better, and not waste all our time in ephemeral things. But if we do not use our reasoning faculties now, we shall yet see with our own eyes, the Penalty for our sins. It will be certainty of sight. We shall see Hell. See next verse.

But the absolute certainty of assured Truth is that described in 69:51. That is not liable to any human error or psychological defects.

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ (٦)

6. Ye shall certainly see Hellfire!

C6260. See 19:71-72, and n. 2518.

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ (٧)

7. Again, ye shall see it with certainty of sight!

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ (٨)

8. Then, shall ye be Questioned that Day about the joy (ye indulged in)!

C6261. We shall be questioned, i.e., we shall be held responsible for every kind of joy we indulge in-whether it was false pride or delight in things of no value, or things evil, or the enjoyment of things legitimate,-the last, to see whether we kept this within reasonable bounds.



وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

By (the Token of) time (through the Ages), Verily Man is in loss,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al 'Asr

الْعَصْرِ

Introduction and Summary

This early Makkan Surah refers to the testimony of Time through the ages. All history shows that Evil came to an evil end. But Time is always in favour of those who have Faith, live clean and pure lives, and know how to wait, in patience and constancy. Cf. the theme of S.95.

C.283 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Waste not, nor misuse, your life. Time
Through the Ages bears witness that nothing remains

But Faith and Good Deeds, and the teaching of Truth
And the teaching of Patience and Constancy.
But for these, Man against Time is in loss!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالْعَصْرِ (١)

1. By (the Token of) time (through the Ages),

C6262. Al-Asr may mean:

1. Time through the Ages, or long periods, in which case it comes near to the abstract idea of Time, **Dahr**;
2. or the late afternoon, from which the **Asr** canonical prayer takes its name (see n. 271 to 2:238).

An appeal is made to Time as one of the creations of Allah, of which everyone knows something but of which no one can fully explain the exact significance.

Time searches out and destroys everything material. No one in secular literature has expressed the tyranny of "never-resting Time" better than Shakespeare in his Sonnets.

> For example, see Sonnets 5 ("never-resting Time"), 12 ("Nothing against Time's scythe can make defence"), and 64 ("When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced The rich proud cost of outworn buried age").

If we merely run a race against Time, we shall lose. It is the spiritual part of us that conquers Time. See verse 3 below.

For the "afternoon" idea see next note.

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ (٢)

2. Verily Man is in loss,

C6263. If life be considered under the metaphor of a business bargain, man, by merely attending to his material gains, will lose. When he makes up his day's account in the afternoon, it will show a loss.

It will only show profit if he has Faith, leads a good life, and contributes to social welfare by directing and encouraging other people on the Path of Truth and Constancy.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ...

3. Except such as have

- Faith, and do **righteous deeds**,

C6264. Faith is his armour, which wards off the wounds of the material world; and his righteous life is his positive contribution to spiritual ascent.

... وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ...

- and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth,

C6265. If he lived only for himself, he would not fulfil his whole duty. Whatever good he has, especially in moral and spiritual life, he must spread among his brethren, so that they may see the Truth and stand by it in patient hope and unshaken constancy amidst all the storm and stress of outer life.

For he and they will then have attained Peace within.

... وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ (٣)

- and of Patience and Constancy.



وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

Woe to every (kind of) scandalmonger and backbiter,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Humuzah

هُمَزَةٍ

Introduction and Summary

This Makkan Surah condemns all sorts of scandal, backbiting, and selfish hoarding of wealth, as destroying the hearts and affections of men

C.284 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Woe to the man or woman who deals

In scandal, in word or act, or by insults

Or suggestions. Woe to the backbiter, e'en

If his tale is true, for the taint is in his motive.
Woe to the miser who blocks up the channels
Of use and service and dams up his wealth,
As if he could remain in possession
For all time1 The Fire of Wrath will envelop them
And wither up their hearts and minds, and consume
That largeness of life which is the portion of mankind.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ (١)

1. Woe to every (kind of) scandalmonger and backbiter,

C6266. Three vices are here condemned in the strongest terms:

1. scandal-mongering, talking or suggesting evil of men or women by word or innuendo, or behaviour, or mimicry, or sarcasm, or insult;
2. detracting from their character behind their backs, even if the things suggested are true, where the motive is evil;
3. piling up wealth, not for use and service to those who need it, but in miserly hoards, as if such hoards can prolong the miser's life or give him immortality: miserliness is itself a kind of scandal.

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ (٢)

2. Who pileth up wealth and layeth it by,

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ (٣)

3. Thinking that his wealth would make him last for ever!

كَلَّا لَيُنبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ (٤)

4. By no means!

He will be sure to be thrown into that which breaks to pieces.

C6267. Hutamah: that which smashes or breaks to pieces: an apt description of the three anti-social vices condemned.

For scandal-mongering and backbiting make any sort of cohesion or mutual confidence impossible; and the miser's hoards up the channels of economic service and charity, and the circulation of good-will among men.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ (٥)

5. And what will explain to thee that which Breaks to Pieces?

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ (٦)

6. (It is) the Fire of (the Wrath of) Allah kindled (to a blaze),

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ (٧)

7. The which doth mount (Right) to the Hearts:

C6268. This Fire of Punishment mounts right up to the hearts and minds of such men, and shuts them out of the love of their fellows.

"**Heart**" in Arabic means not only the seat of affection, pity, charity, etc., but also of understanding and intelligent appreciation of things.

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِم مُّؤْصَدَةٌ (٨)

8. It shall be made into a vault over them,

فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ (٩)

9. In columns outstretched.

C6269. Those guilty of these vices will be choked and suffocated, for this Vault of Fire will cover them all over, and its scorching columns will extend over a far wider area than they imagine.





Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Fil

الفيل

Introduction and Summary

This early Makkan Surah refer to an event that happened in the year of birth of our Holy Prophet, say about 570 A.C. Yemen was then under the rule of Abyssinians (Christians) who had driven out the Jewish Himyarite rulers.

Abrahah Ashram was the Abyssinians governor or viceroy. Intoxicated with power and fired by religious fanaticism, he led a big expedition against Makkah, intending to destroy the Ka'bah. He had an elephant or elephants in his train.

But his sacrilegious intentions were defeated by a miracle. No defence was offered by the custodians of the Ka'bah as the Army was too strong for them. But a shower of stones, thrown by flocks of birds, destroyed the invading army almost to a man. The stones produced sores and pustules on the skin, which spread like a pestilence. (R).

C.285 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Let not man be intoxicated with power
Or material resources: they cannot defeat
The Purpose of Allah. So Abrahah Ashram
Found to his cost. His sacrilegious attack
On the holy Fane of Allah brought about
His own undoing: what seemed but frail
Destroyed his mighty hosts in a day!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ (١)

1. **Seest** thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Companions of the **Elephant**?

C6270. Seest thou not?-

i.e. with thy mental vision. The incident happened in the very year of the holy Prophet's birth, barely two months before it,

C6271. These were the troops of Abrahah the Abyssinian, who invaded Makkah with a large army, in which were some elephants. See Introduction to this Surah.

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ (٢)

2. Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray?

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ (٣)

3. And He sent against them flights of Birds,

C6272. The miracle consisted in the birds coming in large flights and flinging stones at the army which destroyed the whole of Abrahah's army.

تَرْمِيهِم بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ (٤)

4. Striking them with **stones** of baked clay.

C6273. Sijjil: see n. 1579 to 11:82.

The word also occurs at 15:74.

Stones of baked clay, or hard as baked clay, are part of the miracle in the story.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ (٥)

5. Then did He make them like an empty **field** of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been **eaten up**.

C6274. A field, from which all the corn has been eaten up and only straw with stalks or stubble is left, is a field dead and useless. And such was the army of Abrahah,- dead and useless.

Another possible rendering would be:

"like eaten straw and stubble found in the dung of animals".

The meaning would be the same, but much more emphatic.

C6275. The lesson to be drawn is twofold. For the Pagan Quraysh of Makkah it was:

Allah will protect His own; if you persecute the holy Prophet, he is greater than the mere building of the Ka'bah: will not Allah protect him?

For men in all ages it is:

'a man intoxicated with power can prepare armies and material resources against Allah's holy Plan; but such a man's plan will be his own undoing; he cannot prevail against Allah'.



الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُم مِّنْ خَوْفٍ

Who provides them with food against hunger, and with security against fear (of danger).

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Quraysh

قُرَيْش

Introduction and Summary

This Makkan Surah may well be considered as a pendant to the last. If the Quraysh were fond of Makkah and proud of it, if they profited, by its central position and its guaranteed security, from their caravans of trade and commerce, let them be grateful, adore the One True God, and accept His Message.

C.286 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Who gave the Quraysh their talents for the arts

Of peace, for trade and commerce, and for journeys

South and north at proper seasons.
And made their home inviolable in Makkah?
Surely they, if any, should adore their Lord
And listen to His Message of Unity and Truth.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لِإِيلَافِ قُرَيْشٍ (١)

1. For the covenants (of security and safeguard enjoyed) by the Quraysh,

C6276. The Quraysh were the noblest tribe of Arabia, the tribe to which belonged the holy Prophet himself. They had the custody of the Ka'bah, the central shrine of Arabia, and their possession of Makkah gave them a triple advantage:

1. they had a commanding influence over other tribes;
2. their central position facilitated trade and intercourse, which gave them both honour and profit; and
3. the Makkah territory being by Arabian custom inviolable from the ravages of war and private feuds, they had a secure position, free from fear of danger.

This honour and advantage they owed to their position as servants of the sacred shrine of the Ka'bah. They owed it to Allah. Was it not therefore right and fitting that they should adore the One True God, and listen to His Message of Unity and Purity, brought by His Prophet?

In those days of general insecurity, their prestige as custodians of Makkah enabled them to obtain Covenants of security and safeguard from the rulers of neighbouring countries on all sides-Syria, Persia, Yemen, and Abyssinia-protecting their trade journey in all seasons.

إِيلَافِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ (٢)

2. Their covenants (covering) journeys by winter and summer --

C6277. See last note, especially section (2).

On account of their trade journeys to the warmth of Yemen in the winter and the cooler regions of Syria and the north in the summer, the Quraysh became practised travellers and merchants, acquired much knowledge of the world and perfected their language as a polished medium of literary expression.

فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ (٣)

3. Let them adore the Lord of this House,

C6278. The Ka'bah.

الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُم مِّنْ خَوْفٍ (٤)

4. Who provides them with food against **hunger**, and with security against **fear** (of danger).

C6279. Their trade caravans enriched them, and drew people from distant parts to visit Makkah and bring their merchandise and gifts thither.

C6280. Their territory being inviolable, they did not suffer from the dangers of constant warfare nor from private feuds of vengeance or breaches of the peace in their secure homes.

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَن صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

So woe to the worshippers, Who are neglectful of their Prayers,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ma'un

الْمَاعُونَ

Introduction and Summary

This Surah---at least the first half of it---belongs to the early Makkan period. The subject is the meaning of true worship, which requires Faith, the practical and helpful love of those in need, and sincerity rather than show in devotion and charity.

C.287 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

What remains if you deny all Faith
And personal Responsibility? Why then
Help the helpless or reach others

Deeds of charity? Vain were worship
Without heart and soul. What think ye of men
Who make great show, but fail to meet
The simple needs of daily life?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّينِ (١)

1. Seest thou one who denies the **Judgment** (to come)?

C6281. Din may mean either

1. the Judgment to come, the responsibility in the moral and spiritual world, for all actions done by men, or
2. Faith, Religion, the principles of right and wrong in spiritual matters, which often conflict with selfish desires or predilections.

It is men who deny Faith or future responsibility, that treats the helpless with contempt and lead arrogant selfish lives.

فَذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ (٢)

2. Then such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness),

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ (٣)

3. And **encourages not** the feeding of the indigent.

C6282. The Charity or Love which feeds the indigent at the expense of Self is a noble form of virtue, which is beyond the reach of men who are so callous as even to discourage or forbid or look down upon the virtue of charity or kindness in others.

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ (٤)

4. So woe to the worshippers

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَن صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (٥)

5. Who are neglectful of their Prayers,

C6283. True worship does not consist in the mere form of prayer, without the heart and mind being earnestly applied to seek the realisation of the presence of Allah, and to understand and do His Holy Will.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاؤُونَ (٦)

6. Those who (want but) to be seen (of men),

6. Those who (want but) to be seen (of men),

C6284. Cf. 4:142:

> "When they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance."

وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ (٧)

7. But refuse (to supply) (even) neighborly needs.

C6285. Hypocrites make a great show of hollow acts of goodness, devotion, and charity. But they fail signally if you test them by little acts of neighbourly help or charity, the thousand little courtesies and kindnesses of daily life, the supply of needs which cost little but mean much.

The Absolute Reality

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ

To thee have We granted the Fount (Of Abundance). Therefore to thy Lord turn in Prayer and Sacrifice.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Kawthar

الْكَوْثَرَ

Introduction and Summary

This very brief early Makkan Surah sums up in the single mystic word *kawthar* (Abundance) the doctrine of spiritual Riches through devotion and sacrifice.

The converse also follows: indulgence in hatred means the cutting off all hopes of this life and the Hereafter.

C.288 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

To the man of God, rich in divine
Blessing, is granted a Fountain unfailing
That will quench the spiritual thirst of millions.
Turn, then, in devotion and sacrifice to Allah.
Nor heed the venom of Hatred, which destroys
Its own hopes, alas of present and the future!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ (١)

1. To thee have We granted the Fount (Of Abundance).

C6286. Kawthar literally means "good in abundance".

It is the abundant bounty which Allah bestowed on Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). This includes a river (or fountain) in heaven of this name which Allah has promised the Prophet (peace be on him). [Eds]

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ (٢)

2. Therefore to thy Lord turn in Prayer and Sacrifice.

C6287. He who grants these blessings is Allah, and to Allah alone must we turn in adoration and thanksgiving, and in sacrifice.

Nahr: sacrifice: in a restricted ritual sense, the sacrifice of camels:

See n. 2813 to 22:36.

But the ritual is a mere Symbol. Behind it is a deep spiritual meaning: the meat slaughtered feeds the poor, and the slaughter is a symbol of the self-sacrifice in our hearts.

"It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him" (22:37).

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ (٣)

3. For he who hateth thee -- he will be cut off (from Future Hope).

C6288. Hatred and spite are not constructive contributions to the work of this world, but its opposites.

Abu Jahl and his Pagan confederates vented their personal spite and venom against the Holy Prophet by taunting him with the loss of his two infant sons by Khadija, but where were these venomous detractors a few years afterwards, when the divine Light shone more brilliantly than ever?

It was these that were cut off from all future hope, in this world and the next.



قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

Say : O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship,

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Kafirun

الْكَافِرُونَ

Introduction and Summary

This is another early Makkan Surah. It defines the right attitude to those who reject Faith; in matters of Truth we can make no compromise, but there is no need to prosecute or abuse anyone for his faith or belief.

C.289 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The man of Faith holds fast to his faith,
Because he knows it is true. The man
Of the world, rejecting Faith, clings hard

To worldly interests. Let him mind
His worldly interests, but let him not
Force his interests on men sincere
And true, by favour, force or fraud.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (١)

1. Say: O ye that reject Faith!

C6289. Faith is a matter of personal conviction, and does not depend on worldly motives.

Worship should depend on pure and sincere Faith, but often does not: for motives of worldly gain, ancestral custom, social conventions or imitative instincts, or a lethargic instinct to shrink from enquiring into the real significance of solemn acts and the motives behind them, reduce a great deal of the world's worship to sin, selfishness, or futility.

Symbolic idols may themselves be merely instruments for safeguarding the privileges of a selfish priestly class, or the ambitions, greed, or lust of private individuals.

Hence the insistence of Islam and its Prophet on the pure worship of the One True God. The Prophet firmly resisted all appeals to worldly motives, and stood firm to his Message of eternal Unity.

لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢)

2. I worship not that which ye worship,

وَلَا أَنتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (٣)

3. Nor will ye worship that which I worship.

C6290. Verses 2-3 describe the conditions as they were at the time when this Surah was revealed, and may be freely paraphrased:

'I am a worshipper of the One True God, the Lord of all, of you as well as of myself; but you on account of your vested interests have not the will to give up your false worship, of idols and self'.

وَلَآ أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ (٤)

4. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship,

وَلَآ أَنتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (٥)

5. Nor will ye worship that which I worship.

Verses 4-5 describe the psychological reasons: I, being a prophet of Allah do not and cannot possibly desire to follow your false ancestral ways; and you, as custodians of the false worship, have not the will to give up your ways of worship, which are wrong'.

The "will" in the translation represents less the future tense than the will, the desire, the psychological possibility: it tries to reproduce the Arabic noun-agent.

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (٦)

6. To you be your Way, and to me mine

C6291. 'I, having been given the Truth, cannot come to your false ways: you, having your vested interests, will not give them up. For your ways the responsibility is yours: I have shown you the Truth. For my ways the responsibility is mine: you have no right to ask me to abandon the Truth. Your persecutions will be vain: the Truth must prevail in the end'.

This was the attitude of Faith then: but it is true for all time. Hold fast to Truth, "in scorn of consequence".

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

So glorify the Praises of your Lord, and ask for His Forgiveness.
Verily, He is the One Who accepts the repentance and forgives.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Nasr

النَّصْر

Introduction and Summary

This beautiful Surah was the last of the Surahs to be revealed as a whole, though the portion of the verse 5:4 "This day I perfected your religion for you" etc., contains probably the last words of Quran to be revealed.

The date of this Surah was only a few months before the passing away of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) from this world, *Rabi 1,* A.H. 11. The place was either the precincts of Makkah at his Farewell Pilgrimage, *Dhul al Hijjah,* A.H. 10, or Madinah after his return from the Farewell Pilgrimage.

Victory is the crown of service, not an occasion for exultation. All victory comes from the help of Allah.

C.290 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

For that which is right the help of Allah.

Is ever nigh, and victory!

When the spirit of men is stirred, they come

To the flag of faith in troops and battalions.

They are to be welcomed: but Praise and Glory

Belong to Allah: to Him we humbly

Turn and pray for Grace: for He

Is Oft-Returning in Grace and Mercy.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا جَاء نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ (١)

1. When comes the Help of Allah, and Victory,

وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا (٢)

2. And thou dost see the People enter Allah's Religion in crowds,

C6292. The Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah, a persecuted man. In Madinah all the forces of truth and righteousness rallied round him, and the efforts by the Makkans and their confederates to destroy him and his community recoiled on their own heads.

Gradually all the outlying parts of Arabia ranged themselves round his standard, and the bloodless conquest of Makkah was the crown and prize of his patience and constant endeavour.

After that, whole tribes and tracts of country gave their adhesion to him collectively, and before his ministry was finished, the soil was prepared for the conquest of the wide world for Islam.

What was the lesson to be learnt from this little epitome of the world's history?

Not man's self-glory, but humility; and power but service; not an appeal to man's selfishness or self-sufficiency, but a realisation of Allah's Grace and Mercy, and the abundant outpouring of Allah's Praises in word and conduct.

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (٣)

3. Full of Wisdom.Celebrate the Praises of thy Lord, and pray for His Forgiveness: for He is Oft-Returning (in Grace and Mercy).

C6293. Every man should humble himself before Allah, confess his human frailties, and seek Allah's grace---attributing any success that he gets in his work, not to his own merits, but to the goodness and mercy of Allah.

But the Prophet of Allah had also another duty and privilege--- to pray for grace and forgiveness for his people in case of them had exulted in their victory or done anything that they should not have done.



مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ

No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains!

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Masad

المَسَد

Introduction and Summary

This very early Makkan Surah, though it referred in the first instance to a particular incidence in a cruel and relentless persecution, carries the general lesson that cruelty ultimately ruins itself. The man who rages against holy things is burned up in his own rage. His hands, which are the instruments of his actions, perish, and he perishes himself. No boasted wealth or position will save him.

The woman, who are made for nobler emotions, may, if they go wrong, feed unholy rage with fiercer feel---to their own loss. For they may twist the torturing rope round their own neck. It is a

common experience that people perish by the very means by which they seek to destroy others.

C.291 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

The chosen One of Allah, in his earnest
Desire to proclaim the Message, gathered
His kin together to hear and judge
With open minds between error and truth.
Behold, the fiery "Father of Flames"
Blazed up with foul abuse and curses,
And said to the holy one: "Perish thou!"
With his hands he took stones and cast them
At the holy one's head. Purse-proud he headed
Relentless persecution. His wife
Laid snares, tied thorns with twisted ropes
Of prickly palm-leaf fibre, and strewed them
In the holy one's path on darkest nights,
For cruel sport! But lo! the curses,
Insults, spite, harmed not that Innocent,
But hit the wrongdoers themselves
And branded them with eternal infamy!

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ (١)

1. Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he!

C6294. Abu Lahab, "Father of Flame", was the nick-name of an uncle of the Holy Prophet, from his fiery hot temper and his ruddy complexion.

He was one of the most inveterate enemies of early Islam. When the holy Prophet called together the Quraish and his own kith and kin to come and listen to his preaching and his warning against the sins of his people, the "Father of Flame" flared up and cursed the Holy Prophet, saying "Perdition to thee!"

According to the English saying, "the causeless curse will not come".

His words were futile, but his power and strength were equally futile.

The star of Islam rose higher and higher every day, and its persecutors dwindled in strength and power. Many of the leaders of persecution perished at Badr, and Abu Lahab himself perished a week after Badr, consumed with grief and his own fiery passions.

Verse 3 was prophetic of his end in this very life, though it also refers to the Hereafter.

مَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ (٢)

2. No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains!

سَيَصْلَى نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ (٣)

3. Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of blazing Flame!

وَامْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ (٤)

4. His wife shall carry the (crackling) wood -- as fuel! --

C6295. Abu Lahab's wife was a woman of equally passionate spite and cruelty against the sacred person of the Holy Prophet.

She used to tie bundles of thorns with ropes of twisted palm-leaf fibre and carry them and strew them about on dark nights in the paths which the Prophet was expected to take, in order to cause him bodily injury.

"To carry firewood" may also be symbolical for carrying tales between people to embroil them. This was also one of her vices. But she was laying up for herself another

kind of Fire and another kind of Rope, the Fire of Punishment, and the Rope of Slavery to Evil.

Thus does Evil prepare its own fate. This is the general lesson of sustained craft and cruel wrong-doing recoiling on the wrong-doer's head.

See also Introduction to this Surah.

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ (٥)

5. A twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre round her (own) neck!



The Absolute Reality

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;
He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Ikhlas

الإخلاص

Introduction and Summary

This early Makkan Surah sums up in a few terse words the Unity of the Godhead---often professed, but frequently mixed up in the popular mind with debasing superstitions.

C.292 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Keep Faith all pure and undefiled.

There is Allah, the One and Only:

Eternal, Free of all needs; on Whom
Depend; to Whom go back, all things;
He hath no son nor father nor partner.
There is no person like Unto Him.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (١)

1. Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;

C6296. The nature of Allah is here indicated to us in a few words, such as we can understand. The qualities of Allah are described in numerous places elsewhere, e.g., in 49:22-24, 62:1, and 2:255.

Here we are specially taught to avoid the pitfalls into which men and nations have fallen at various times in trying to understand Allah.

- The first thing we have to note is that His nature is so sublime, so far beyond our limited conceptions, that the best way in which we can realise Him is to feel that He is a Personality, "He", and not a mere abstract conception of philosophy. He is near us; He cares for us; we owe our existence to Him.
- Secondly, He is the One and Only God, the Only One to Whom worship is due; all other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way comparable to Him.
- Thirdly, He is Eternal, without beginning or end, Absolute, not limited by time or place or circumstance, the Reality.
- Fourthly, we must not think of Him as having a son or a father, for that would be to import animal qualities into our conception of Him.

- Fifthly, He is not like any other person or thing that we know or can imagine: His qualities and nature are unique.

the One and Only;

C6297. This is to negative the idea of Polytheism, a system in which people believe in gods many and lords many. Such a system is opposed to our truest and profoundest conceptions of life. For Unity in Design, Unity in the fundamental facts of existence, proclaim the Unity of the Maker.

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (٢)

2. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;

C6298. Samad is difficult to translate by one word. I have used two, "Eternal" and "Absolute". The latter implies:

1. that absolute existence can only be predicated of Him; all other existence is temporal or conditional;
2. that He is dependent on no person or things, but all persons or things are dependent on Him,

thus negating the idea of gods and goddesses who ate and drank, wrangled and plotted, depended on the gifts of worshippers, etc.

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (٣)

3. He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;

C6299. This is to negative the Christian idea of the godhead,

- "the Father",
- "the only-begotten Son" etc.

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (٤)

4. And there is none like unto Him.

C6300. This sums up the whole argument and warns us specially against Anthropomorphism, the tendency to conceive of Allah after our own pattern, an insidious tendency that creeps in at all times and among all peoples.



The Absolute Reality

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of the Dawn, From the mischief of created things;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Falaq

الْفَلَق

Introduction and Summary

This early Makkan Surah provides the antidote to superstition and fear by teaching us to seek refuge in Allah from every kind of ill arising from outer nature and from dark and evil plottings and envy on the part of others.

C.293 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

It is Allah Who brings forth light from darkness,

life and activity from death, spiritual

Enlightenment from ignorance and superstition
Banish fear, and trust His Providence
No danger, then, from the outer world,
No secret plottings from perverted wills,
No disturbance of your happiness or good
Can affect the fortress of your inmost soul.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ (١)

1. Say: I seek **refuge** with the Lord of the **Dawn**,

C6301. In Allah's created world, there are all kinds of forces and counter-forces, especially those put in motion by beings who have been endowed with some sort of will.

The forces of good may be compared to light, and those of evil to darkness.

Allah can cleave the depths of darkness and produce light (6:96), and therefore we should cast off fear and take refuge in divine guidance and goodness.

C6302. Falaq is the Dawn or Daybreak, the cleaving of darkness and the manifestation of light.

This may be understood in various senses:

1. literally, when the darkness of the night is at its worst, rays of light pierce through and produce the dawn;
2. when the darkness of ignorance is at its worst, the light of Allah pierces through the soul and gives it enlightenment: (24:35);
3. non-existence is darkness, and life and activity may be typified by light.

مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ (٢)

2. From the mischief of created things;

C6303. See n. 6301 above.

Our trust in Allah is the refuge from every kind of fear and superstition, every kind of danger and evil.

Three special kinds of mischief are specified in the next three verses, against which our best guard is our trust in Allah, the Light of the heavens and the earth. They are:

1. physical dangers, typified by darkness.
2. physical dangers within us, typified by Secret Arts, and
3. physical dangers from without us, resulting from a perverted will, which seeks to destroy any good that we enjoy.

وَمِن شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ (٣)

3. From the mischief of Darkness as it overspreads;

C6304. The darkness of the night, physical darkness, is a good type of physical dangers and difficulties. Many people are afraid of physical darkness, and all are afraid of physical injuries, accidents, and calamities.

We should not fear, but having taken reasonable precautions, trust in Allah.

وَمِن شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ (٤)

4. From the mischief of those who practice Secret Arts;

C6305. Those (feminine) who blow on knots', this having been a favourite form of witchcraft practised by perverted women. Such secret arts cause psychological terror.

They may be what is called magic, or secret plottings, or the display of false and seductive charms (3:14), or the spreading of false and secret rumours or slanders to frighten men or deter them from right action.

There is fraud in such things, but men are swayed by it. They should cast off fear and do their duty.

وَمِن شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ (٥)

5. And from the mischief of the envious one as he practices envy.

C6306. Malignant envy, translated into action, seeks to destroy the happiness or the material or spiritual good enjoyed by other people.

The best guard against it is trust in Allah with purity of heart.



قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ مَلِكِ النَّاسِ إِلَٰهِ النَّاسِ

Say: I seek refuge with the Lord and Cherisher of Mankind, The King (or Ruler) of Mankind, The Allah (or Judge) of Mankind –

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Al Nas

النَّاس

Introduction and Summary

This early Makkan Surah is a pendant to the last, and concludes the Holy Quran with an appeal to us to trust in Allah, rather than man, as our sure shield and protection. it warns us specially against the secret whispers of evil within our own hearts.

C.294 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

Insidious Evil lies in wait
For man, and loves to whisper and withdraws.
Thus testing his will. But man can make

Allah his sure shield: for Allah doth care
For him and cherishes him: Allah is
The heavenly King Who gives him laws:
And Allah is the Goal to which he will
Return and be judged. Let man but place
Himself in Allah's hands, and never can Evil
Touch him in his Essential and inner life.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ (١)

1. Say: I seek **refuge** with the Lord and Cherisher of **Mankind**,

C6307. The previous Surah pointed to the necessity of seeking Allah's protection against external factors which might affect an individual.

Here the need of protection from internal factors, mankind being viewed as a whole, is pointed out. For this reason the threefold relation in which man stands to Allah is mentioned, as explained in the next note.

C6308. Man's relation to Allah may be viewed in three aspects:

1. Allah is his Lord, Maker, and Cherisher; Allah sustains him and cares for him; He provides him with all the means for his growth and development, and for his protection against evil;
2. Allah is his king or ruler; more than any earthly king, Allah has authority to guide man's conduct, and lead him to ways which will make for his welfare; and He has given him laws; and
3. Allah is He to Whom mankind must return, to give an account of all their deeds in this life (2:156)-, Allah will be the Judge-, He is the goal of the Hereafter, and the only Being entitled to man's worship at any time.

From all these aspects man could and should seek Allah's protection against evil.

مَلِكِ النَّاس (٢)

2. The King (or Ruler) of Mankind,

إِلٰهِ النَّاس (٣)

3. The Allah (or Judge) of Mankind --

مِن شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاس (٤)

4. From the mischief of the **Whisperer** (of Evil), who withdraws (after his whisper) -

C6309. Evil insinuates itself in all sorts of insidious ways from within so as to sap man's will, which was given to man by Allah.

This power of evil may be Satan, or evil men or the evil inclinations within man's own will: for there are "evil ones among men and Jinns, inspiring each other with flowery discourses by way of deception" (6: 112).

They secretly whisper evil and then withdraw, to make their net the more subtle and alluring.

الَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاس (٥)

5. (The same) who whispers into the hearts of mankind --

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَ النَّاس (٦)

6. Among Jinns and among Men._

C6310. This last clause amplifies the description of the sources from which the whisper of evil may emanate: they may be men whom you may see or invisible spirits of evil working within. See last note.

So long as we put ourselves in Allah's protection, and trust in Allah, evil cannot really touch us in our essential and inner life.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

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Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Appendix I

The Abbreviated Letters

(Al Muqattaat)

Certain Surahs have certain initials prefixed to them, which are called the "Abbreviated Letters."

A number of conjectures have been made as to their meaning. Opinions are divided as to the exact meaning of each particular letter or combination of letters, and it is agreed that only Allah knows their exact meaning. (R).

Their presence is not inconsistent with the character of the Quran as a "plain book." The book of nature is also a plain book, but how few can fully understand it? Everyone can get out of the Quran plain guidance for his life according to his capacity for

spiritual understanding. As his capacity grows, so will his understanding grow. The whole Book is a record for all time. It must necessarily contain truths that only gradually unfold themselves to humanity.

This is not mystery of the same class as "mysteries" by which we are asked to believe against the dictates of reason. If we are asked to believe that one is three and three is one, we can give no intelligible meaning to the words. If we are asked to believe that certain initials have meaning which will be understood in the fullness of time or of spiritual development, we are asked to draw upon faith, but we are not asked to do any violence to our reason.

I shall try to discuss some of the probable meanings of any particular abbreviated letter or set of abbreviated letters on the first occasion on which it appears in the Quran. But it may be desirable here to take a general view of the facts of their occurrence to help us in appreciating the various views which are held about them.

There are 29 letters in the Arabic alphabet (counting hamzah and alif as two letters), and there are 29 Surahs which have abbreviated letters prefixed to them. One of these Surahs (Surah 42) has two sets of abbreviated letters, but we need not count this Surah twice. If we take the half of the alphabet, omitting the fraction, we get 14, and this is the number of letters which actually occur in the Muqatta'at.

The 14 letters, which occur in various combinations, are:

Alif	ا	Qaf	ق
Ha	ح	Kaf	ك
Ra	ر	Lam	ل
Sin	س	Mim	م
Sad	ص	Nun	ن
Ta	ط	Ha	ه
Ayn	ع	Ya	ي

The science of phonetics tells us that our vocal sounds arise from the expulsion of the air from the lungs, and the sounds are determined by the way in which the breath passes through the

various organs of speech, e.g., the throat (guttural), or the various positions of the tongue to the middle or front of the palate or to the teeth, or the play of the lips. Everyone of these kinds of sounds is represented in these letters.

Let us now examine the combinations.

Three of these letters occur alone prefixed each to only one Surah. The letters and Surahs are:

Surah 38	Sad	ص
Surah 50	Qaf	ق
Surah 68	Nun	ن

The combinations of two letters occur in ten Surahs as shown below. Three of them occur only once each, but the fourth Ha Mim (حم) occurs in seven consecutive Surahs.

Surah 20	Ta Ha	طه
Surah 27	Ta Sin	طس
Surah 36	Ya Sin	يس
Surah 40-46	HA Mim	حم

Note that Surah 42 has a double combination of abbreviated letters, one of two followed by one of three. See under combinations of five.

There are three combinations of three letters each, occurring as follows in 13 Surahs:

Surah 2, 3, 29, 30, 31, 32	Alif Lam Mim	الم
Surah 10, 11, 12, 14, 15	Alif Lam Ra	الر
Surah 26, 28	Ta Sin Mim	طسم

Combinations of four letters occur twice, each only once.

Surah 7	Alif Lam Mim Sad	المص
Surah 13*	Alif Lam Mim Ra	المر

*Note that the three preceding and the two following Surahs have the triple letters Alif, Lam, Mim, Ra.

Finally there remain the combinations of five letters, each of which occurs once only, as follows:

Surah 19	Kaf Ha Ya Ayn Sad	كهيعص
Surah 42	Ha Mim – Ayn Sin Qaf	حم عسق

In Surah 42, the Ha Mim (حم) and 'Ayn Sin Qaf (عسق) are put in separate verses. From that point of view they may be considered two separate combinations. The first combination has already been listed under the group of two-letter combinations.

This arithmetical analysis brings certain facts into prominence. I do not know how far they have a bearing on the inner meaning of the Maqatta'at.

The combinations of abbreviated letters that run in a series in consecutive Surahs is noticeable. For example,

- Ha Mim (حم) occurs in seven consecutive Surahs from 40 to 46.
- the combination Alif, Lam Ra (الر) occurs in six consecutive Surahs, 10 to 15,

but in one of them (Surah 13) is modified to Alif Lam Mim Ra (المر) connecting it with the Alif Lam Mim (الم) series.

The Alif Lam Mim (الم) series covers six Surahs. It begins with Surah 2 and Surah 3 which are practically the beginning of the Quran, and ends with the four consecutive Surahs, 29 to 32.

I call Surah 2 and Surah 3 practically the beginning of the Quran, because Surah 1 is considered a general introduction to the Quran, and the first Sipara or Juz is commonly known as Alif Lam Mim (الم) the first verse of Surah 2. The combination Ta Sin Mim (طسم) is prefixed to Surah 26 and Surah 28, but the

intervening Surah 27 has the combination Ta Sin (طس) which may be considered a syncopated form, or the three-letter combination Ta Sin Mim (طسم) may be considered an extended form of Ta Sin (طس).

Again the question arises; does the Mim (م) in Alif Lam Mim (الم) and Ha Mim (حم), Ta Sin Mim (طسم) stand for the same significance, or does it mean a different thing in each case?

We may generalize and say that

- there are three series of six,
- and one series of three,
- and the others occur all singly.

We should logically look for a common factor in the Surahs bearing the same initials, and this factor should be different for Surahs bearing other initials.

In all cases where the abbreviated letters occur, there is some mention of the Quran or the Book.

The *Itqan* makes an exception in the case of three Surahs;

- Al Ankabut (Surah 29),
- Al Rum (Surah 30), and
- Nun (Surah 68).

But a close perusal will show that these Surahs are no exceptions.

- In 29:27 we have a reference to the Book remaining in the family of Abraham, and later on we have a whole Section, devoted to the Book, with special reference to the continuity of revelation in the previous Books and the Quran (29:45-51).
- In 30:58 there is express mention of the Quran, and the whole argument of the Surah leads up to the intimate

relation between Allah's "Sign" in nature (30:20-27) and His revelation in the Quran.

- In Surah 68:1, the very first verse begins the theme from the Pen as the instrument of writing, exhorts Mustafa to stand forth boldly to proclaim the Message, and ends (68:52) with the declaration that it is a Message for all the worlds. (R).

These are general considerations, which I have thought it most convenient to present in the form of an Appendix.



On The Tawrah

(see 5:44, n. 753)

The Tawrah is frequently referred to in the Quran. It is well to have clear ideas as to what it exactly means. Vaguely we may say that it was the Jewish Scripture. It is mentioned with honour as having been, in its purity, a true revelation from Allah.

To translate it by the words "The Old Testament" is obviously wrong.

The "Old Testament" is a Christian term, applied to a body of old Jewish records. The Protestants and the Roman Catholics are not agreed precisely as to the number of records to be included in the canon of the "Old Testament." They use the term in contradistinction to the "New Testament," whose composition we shall discuss in Appendix III.

Nor is it correct to translate Tawrah as the "Pentateuch," a Greek term meaning the "Five Books."

These are the first five books of the Old Testament, known as

- Genesis,
- Exodus,
- Leviticus,
- Numbers, and
- Deuteronomy.

They contain a semi-historical and legendary narrative of the history of the world from the Creation to the time of the arrival of the Jews in the Promised Land. There are in them some beautiful idylls but there are also stories of insects, fraud, cruelty, and treachery, not always disapproved. A great part of the Mosaic Law is embodied in this narrative.

The books are traditionally ascribed to Moses, but it is certain that they were not written by Moses or in an age either contemporary with Moses or within an appreciable distance of time from Moses. They were in their present from probably compiled sometime after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity. The decree of Cyrus permitting such return was in 536 B.C. some books now included in the Old Testament, such as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were admittedly written after the return from the captivity. Malachi being as late as 4q20-397 B.C. the compilers of the Pentateuch of course used some ancient material: some of the material is actually named. Egyptian and Chaldeans terms are relics of local colour and contemporary documents.

But there are some ludicrous slips, which show that the compilers did not always understand their material, Modern criticism distinguishes two district sources among the documents of different dates used by the editors. For the sake of brevity and convince they may be called

a. Jehovistic, and
b. Elohistic.

Then there are later miscellaneous interpolations. They sometimes overlap and sometimes contradict each other's.

Logically speaking, the Book of Joshua, which describe the entry into the Promised Land, should be bracketed with the Pentateuch, and many writers speak of the six books together as the Hexateuch (Greek term for Six Books).

The Apocrypha contain certain Books which are not admitted as Canonical in the English Bible. But the early Christians received them as part of the Jewish Scriptures, and the Council of Trent (A.C. 1545-1563) seems to have recognized the greater part of them as Canonical. The statement in 2 Esdras (about the first century A.C.) that the law was burnt and Ezra (say, about 458-457 B.C.) was inspired to rewrite it., is probably true as to the historical fact that the law was lost, and that what we have now is no earlier than the time of Ezra, and some of it a good deal later.

So far we have spoken of the Christian view of the Old Testament.

What is the Jewish view?

The Jews divide their Scripture into three parts:

1. the Law (Torah),
2. the Prophets (Nebiim), and
3. Kutub.

This division was probably current in the time of Jesus. In Luke 24:44 Jesus refers to the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. In other places (e.g., Matt. 7:12) Jesus refers to the Law and the Prophets to summing up the whole Scripture.

In the Old Testament Book II Chronicles 34:30, the reference to the Book of the Covenant must be to the Torah or the original Law.

This is interesting, as the Quran frequently refers the Covenant with reference to the Jews. The modern Christian terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament" are substitutes for the older terms "Old Covenant" and "New Covenant."

The Samaritans, who claim to be the real Children of Israel and disavow the Jews as schismatic from their Law of Moses, only recognize the Pentateuch, of which they have their own version slightly different from that in the Old Testament.

The view of the school of Higher Criticism is radically destructive. According to Renan it is doubtful whether Moses was not a myth. Two versions of Sacred History existed, different in language, style, and spirit, and they were combined together into a narrative in the reign of Hezekiah (B.C. 727-697). This forms the greater part of the Pentateuch as it exists today, excluding the greater part of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

In the reign of Josiah about 622 B.C., certain priests and scribes (with Jeremiah the Prophet) promulgated a new code, pretending that they had found it in the Temple (II Kings, xxii, 8). This Law (Torah or Tawrah) was the basis of Judaism, the new religion then founded in Palestine.

This was further completed by the sacerdotal and Levitical Torah, compiled under the inspiration of Ezekiel, say, about 575 B.C., and contained mainly in the Book of

Leviticus, with scattered fragments in Exodus, Numbers, and Joshua. We are entitled to accept the general results of a scientific examination of documents, probabilities and dates, even though we reject the promise which we believe to be false, viz., that Allah does not send inspired Books through inspired Prophets.

We believe that Moses existed; that he was an inspired man of God; that he gave a message which was afterwards distorted or lost; that attempts were made by Israel at various times to reconstruct that message; and that the Tawrah as we have it is (in view of the statement in 2 Esdras) no earlier than the middle of the fifth century B.C.

The primitive Torah must have been in old Hebrew, but there is no Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament which can be dated with certainty earlier than 916 A.C. Hebrew ceased to be spoken language with the Jews during or after the Captivity, and by the time we come to the period of Jesus, most cultivated Hebrews used the Greek language, and others used Aramaic (including Syriac and Chaldee). Latin, or local dialects. There were also Arabic versions.

For historical purposes the most important versions were the Greek version, known as the Septuagint, and the Latin version, known as the Vulgate. The Septuagint was supposed to have been prepared by 70 or 72 Jews (Latin, septuaginta = seventy) working independently and at different times, the earliest portion dating from about 284 B.C. this version was used by the Jews of Alexandria and the Hellenized Jew who were spread over all parts of the Roman Empire.

The Vulgate was a Latin translation made by the celebrated Father of the Christian Church, St. Jerome, from Hebrew, early in the fifth century A.C. superseding the older Latin versions. Neither the Septuagint not the Vulgate have an absolutely fixed or certain text. The present standard text of the Vulgate as accepted by the Roman Catholic Church was issued by Pope Clement VIII (A.C. 1592-1605).

It will be seen therefore that there is no standard text of the Old Testament in its Hebrew form. The versions differ from each other frequently in minor particulars and sometimes in important particulars. The Pentateuch itself is only a small portion of the Old Testament. It is narrative form, and includes the laws and regulations associated with the name of Moses, but probably compiled and edited from older sources by Ezra (or Esdras Arabic, 'Uzair) in the 5thcentury B.C. as Renan remarks in the preface to his History of the people of Israel, the "definite constitution of Judaism" may be dated only from the time of Ezra.

The very early Christians were divided into two parties.

- One was a Judaizing party, which wished to remain in adherence to the Jewish laws and customs while recognizing the mission of Jesus.
- The other, led by Paul, broke away from Jewish customs and traditions.

Ultimately Pauline Christianity won. But both parties recognized the Old Testament in its present form (in one or another of its varying versions) as Scripture.

It was the merit of Islam that it pointed out that as scripture it was of no value, although it recognized Moses as an inspired messenger and his original Law as having validity in his period until it was superseded. In its criticism of the Jewish position it said in effect: "You have lost your original Law; even what you have now as its substitute, you do not honestly follow; is it not better, now that an inspired Teacher is living among you, that you should follow him rather than quibble over uncertain texts?"

But the Jews in the Prophet's time (and since) went a great deal by the Talmud, or a body of oral exposition, reduced to writing in different Schools of doctors and learned men. "Talmud" in Hebrew is connected with the Arabic root in Tilmidh, "disciple" or "student." The Tulmudists took the divergent texts of the Old Testament and in interpreting them by a mass of traditional commentary and legendary lore, evolved a standard body of teaching.

The Talmudists are of special interest to us, as, in the sixth century A.C., just before the preaching of Islam, they evolved the Massorah, which may be regarded as the body of authoritative Jewish Hadith, to which references are to be found in passages addressed to the Jews in the Quran.

The first part of the Talmud is called the Mishna -a collection of traditions and decisions prepared by the Rabbi Judah about 150 A.C. He summed up the results of a great mass of previous rabbinical writings. The Mishna is the "Second Law". Cf. the Arabic *Thani* = second. "It bound heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders"; Matt 23:4.

There were many Targum's or paraphrases of the Law among the Jews. "Tagum" is concerned in root with the Arabic Tarjama, "he translated." There were many Targum's, mostly in Aramaic, and they constituted the teaching of the Law to the masses of the Jewish people.

The correct translation of the Tawrah is therefore" The Law." In its original form it was promulgated by Moses, and is recognized in Islam as having been an inspired Book. But it was lost before Islam was preached. What passed as "The Law" with the Jews in the Prophet's time was the mass of traditional writing which I have tried to review in this Appendix.

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Appendix III

On The Injil

(see 5:46, n.757)

Just as the Tawrah is not the Old Testament, or the Pentateuch, as now received by the Jews and Christians, so the Injil mentioned in Quran is certainly not the New Testament, and it is not the four Gospels, as now received by the Christian Church, but an original Gospel which was promulgated by Jesus as the Tawrah was promulgated by Moses and the Quran by Muhammad Mustafa.

The New Testament as now received consists of;

a. four Gospels with varying contents;

- Matthew,
- Mark,
- Luke, and
- John);

and other miscellaneous matters; viz.,

b. the Acts of Apostles (probably written by Luke and purporting to describe the progress of the Christian Church under St. Peter and St Paul from the supposed Crucifixion of Jesus to about 61 A.C.);

c. twenty-one Letters of Epistles (the majority written by St. Paul to various churches or individuals, but a few written by other Disciples, and of a general nature);

d. the Book of Revelation of Apocalypse (ascribed to St. John, and containing mystic visions and prophecies, of which it is difficult to understand the meaning).

As Prof. F.C. Burkitt remarks (Canon of the New Testament), it is an odd miscellany.

> "The four biographies of Jesus Christ…are not all independent of each other, and neither of them was intended by its writer to form one of a quartette. But they are all put side by side, unharmonised, one of them being actually imperfect at the end, and one being only the first volume of a larger work."

All this body of unmethodical literature was casual in its nature. No wonder, because the early Christians expected the end of the world very soon.

The four canonical of Gospel were only four out of many, and some others besides the four have survived. Each writer just wrote down some odd sayings of the Master that he recollected.

Among the miracles described there there is only one which is described in all the four Gospels, and others were described and believed in other Gospels, which are not mentioned in any of the four canonical Gospels.

Some of the Epistles contain expositions of doctrine, but this has been interpreted differently by different Churches. There must have been hundreds of such Epistles, and not all the Epistles now received as canonical were always so received or intended to be so received.

The Apocalypse also was not the only one in the field. There were others. They were prophecies of "things which must shortly come to pass"; they could not have been meant for long preservation, "for the time is at hand."

When were these four Gospels written?

By the end of the second century A.C. they were in existence, but it does not follow that they had been selected by that date to form a canon. They were merely pious productions comparable to Dean Farrar's Life of Christ.

There were other Gospels besides. And further, the writers of two of them. Mark and Luke, were not among the Twelve Disciples "called" by Jesus.

About the Gospel of St. John there is much controversy as to authorship, date, and even as to whether it was all written by one person. Clement of Rome (about 97 A.C.) and Polycarp (about 112 A.C.) quote sayings of Jesus in a form different from those found in the present canonical Gospels. Polycarp (Epistle, vii) inveighs much against men "who pervert the sayings of the Lord to their own lusts," and he wants to turn "to the Word handed down to us from the beginning," thus referring to a Book (or a Tradition) much earlier than the four orthodox Gospels.

An Epistle of St. Barnabas and an Apocalypse of St. Peter were recognized by Presbyter Clement of Alexandria (flourished about 180 A.C.) the Apocalypse of St. John, which is a part of the present canon in the West, forms no part of the Peshitta (Syriac) version of Eastern Christians, which was produced about 411-433 A.C. and which was used by the Nestorian

Christians. It is probable that the Peshitta was the version (or an Arabic form of it) used by the Christians in Arabia in the time of the Prophet.

The final form of the New Testament canon for the West was fixed in the fourth century A.C. (say, about 367 A.C.) by Athanasius and the Nicene creed. The beautiful Codex Sinaiticus which was acquired for the British Museum in 1934, and is one oft earlier complete manuscripts of the Bible, may be dated about the fourth century. It is written in the Greek language. Fragments of unknown Gospels have also been discovered, which do not agree with the received canonical Gospels.

The Injil (Greek, Evangel = Gospel) spoken of by the Quran is not the New Testament. It is not the four Gospels now received as canonical. It is the single Gospel which, Islam teaches, was revealed to Jesus, and which he taught. Fragments of it survive in the received canonical Gospels and in some others, of which traces survive (e.g. the Gospel of Childhood or the Nativity, the Gospel of St. Barnabas, etc.). Muslims are therefore right in respecting the present Bible (New Testament and Old Testament), though they reject the peculiar doctrines taught by orthodox Christianity or Judaism. They claim to be in the true tradition of Abraham, and therefore all that is of value in the older revelations, it is claimed, is incorporated in the teaching of the Last of the Prophets.

In 5:82 we are told that nearest in love to the Believers among the people of the Book are the Christians.

I do not agree that this does not apply to modern Christians "because they are practically atheists or freethinkers."

I think that Christians thought (like the world's thought) has learnt a great deal from the protest of Islam against priest domination, class domination, and sectarianism, and its insistence on making this life pure and beautiful while we in it. We must stretch a friendly hand to all who are sincere and in sympathy with our ideals.

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The first two mentioned for Appendix II, and in addition:

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See also chapter 15 of Gibbon's Decline and Fall of Roman Empire, where the genesis of the early churches and sects in the Roman Empire is briefly reviewed.

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Appendix IV

Egyptian Chronology And Israel

(see 7:104, n. 1072)

In order to get some idea of the comparative chronology of Egypt and Israel, we must first consider what data we have for Egyptian chronology. Israel's surviving records date from a time many centuries later than Israel's contact with Egypt. On the other hand, Egypt's records in monuments, inscriptions, tombs, etc., are rich absolutely reliable as far as they go.

Of the surviving civilizations, Egypt and China go back furthest in time with historical material. Egypt has more interest for us, because geographically it was centrally

situated, and it influenced and was influenced by almost every important cultural movement in Asia, Europe, and Africa, nothing happened in Mediterranean history that had not some points of contact with Egypt.

The first broad division in Egyptian chronology is between the pre-Dynastic and the Dynastic periods. The pre-Dynastic period is all prehistory. But recent researches have shown a great deal of light on the culture of that period, and we know many more details about the arts and tools of that period in Egypt than we do for the corresponding periods of prehistory in other countries.

With the first Egyptian Dynasty of rulers begins the Dynastic period.

What were the Egyptian Dynasties, and why is so much prominence given to them in Egyptian chronology?

The reason is that though we can form a graphic idea of the sequence of events and in many cases of the details of events, arts, and crafts, manners and customs, cults and ceremonies, and social and economic conditions in the dynastic period, we are not yet able, except for occasional and isolated glimpses, to give any accurate figures of early dates to connect them with our chronology B.C.

On the other hand, we have abundant materials to justify us in placing certain events or personages or ideas in some division of the Dynastic scheme. We can say that such and such ideas held sway under the 18th Dynasty or that such and such invasion, outwards or inwards, took place at the close of the 14th Dynasty.

The Dynastic scheme rests mainly on the lists and fragments preserved from the writings of one Manetho, on Egyptian priest and annalist, who lived under Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II (B.C. 313-246), the inheritors of the Egyptian portion of Alexander's Empire. For his Egyptian history in Greek he had access to Egyptian records. His scheme of Dynasties therefore supplies a rough chronological framework into which can be fitted our ever-increasing detailed knowledge derived from Egyptian monuments, tombs, and excavations. His first Dynasty begins with the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, but its actual date

B.C. has been placed at between such wide margins as 5500 B.C. and 3300 B.C.

The two Egypts may be considered distinct ethnical and perhaps geographical divisions, which tend to assimilate when they are united politically, but whose physical characteristics are different, as also their outlook when there is political division. Lower Egypt looks to the Mediterranean, and its population is mixed, containing almost all the Mediterranean and Arab elements, while Upper Egypt looks to interior Africa (Nubia, Sudan, Abyssinia, etc.), and its population tends to have more and more African characteristics.

The whole of Egypt has had a ribbon development, the population and cultivation being confined to the banks of the Nile. Without the Nile Egypt would be just a desert forming a link in the long chain of tropical and subtropical deserts stretching from the Sahara, the Libyan desert, the Arabian deserts, through the Persian, Baluchistan, Sindh, and Rajputana deserts, to the Turki and Gobi deserts in central Asia.

But Upper Egypt is purely a long irregular line along the banks of the Nile, while lower Egypt has the broad fan-link delta in which the many mouths of the Nile run into a very irregular coastline extending over about 200 miles. Lower Egypt had (and has) much marshland, and its low-lying configuration was subject to many physical changes, in the same way as invasions and foreign immigrations gave its population a less stable character. Its cities as Sais and Tanis (Zoan), were also less stable in character, and Memphis (near the site of modern Cairo) has to be just above the Delta.

On the other hand the Capitals in Upper Egypt, such as Thebes (or N0), with their magnificent temples and tombs were safe above Nile waters in the highest inundations until the modern dam of Aswan was built many miles above them.

Even after the union of the two Egypts, the king wore a double crown. The boundary between Upper and Lower Egypt was never clearly defined, because in spite of frequent interruptions in the unity of the country, the

identification of Egypt with the Nile made the unity of Egypt a political and economic necessity, the present boundary of Lower Egypt is just south of Cairo, making Lower Egypt include just the Delta. The tract between Cairo and Assyut is sometimes called Middle Egypt and is distinguished from the rest of Upper Egypt, which is higher up the river.

There being such wide variations in the estimate of ancient dates by component authorities, the only practicable course is to refer ancient events to Dynasties according to Manetho's scheme. In the later dates it is sometimes possible to express a date in approximate figures B.C., but such figures are uncertain, whereas the sequence of Dynasties may be taken to be a stable fact in Egyptian history. Although some of Manetho's material, when it can be tested, has proved to be inaccurate. But we have only Manetho secondhand. The inaccuracies may be due not to Manetho but to his transmitters. Thirty-nine such Dynasties are reckoned, and they may be grouped into Periods as follows:

1. The Old Kingdom, Dynasties I to VII, including a. the first three Dynasties, with a new orientation in Egyptian Art, and b. Dynasties IV VI, the Pyramid Period, during which the Great Pyramid and the second and third Pyramids of Ghizeh were built. The capital now came to Lower Egypt, to the site of Memphis, near modern Cairo.

2. The Middle Kingdom, Dynasties IX to XVII. In Dynasties IX and X the centre of gravity moved from Memphis in Lower Egypt to Middle Egypt. In the XIIth Dynasty many of the great monuments of and near Thebes (Karnak, Luxor, etc.), were constructed. Perhaps the movement higher up the river was necessitated by foreign invasions in Lower Egypt. Dynasties XV to XVII are called the Hyksos Period, when a Syrian Dynasty was established in Lower Egypt, with a sort of lordship over the native Dynasties of Upper Egypt, and international connections in other Mediterranean countries. We shall presently speak of the Hyksos Pharaohs, who

have been placed in the 17th, 18th, and even 26th century B.C.

3. The New Empire, Dynasties XVIII to XX, crowded with events. The dates now begin to be more definite: the period may be placed about 1580 B.C. and about 1200 B.C. the foreign Hyksos were driven out; the empire was extended to Syria and Nubia; perhaps even the Euphrates was reached. Some of the most wonderful works of Egyptian art date from this period.

4. The Dynasties of the Delta. Dynasties XXI to XXXI, including a Dynasty at Sais (on one of the western branches of the Deltaic Nile). But Assyrian and Persian invasions were now weakening the power of Egypt. The dates now became more certain. The XXIst Dynasty was roughly about 1100 B.C. the XXVIIth Dynasty was ended by the invasion of the Persian under Cambyses in 525 B.C. the Persians held sway (with Egyptian local dynasties under them) until the XXXIst Dynasty, when the last Pharaoh fled to Ethiopia about 340 B.C.

5. The Egyptian Dynasties have now ended, we are in firm history: the Macedonian Period after Alexander's conquest, 332 B.C., and the Dynasty of the Ptolemies 323 B.C. to 30 B.C.; and the Roman Period 30 B.C. to 639 A.C. after which the Arab and Turkish conquests evolved modern Egypt and Muslim Egyptian civilization.

Having cleared the chronological background, we are now in a position to examine the data about Israel's stay in Egypt in order to see if we can get some idea of the time in Egyptian history when the contact took place. We saw that Dynasties XV to XVII were concerned with the Hyksos (or Shepherd) kings. They were foreigners from Asia, but it is not quite clear exactly what race they belonged to. Josephus supposed that they were Israelites, but that theory is untenable. It has been conjectured that they were Phoenicians, or Amalekites, or Hittites. In any case they were Semites. They founded a city called Zoan (Tanis) on one of the eastern branches of the Deltaic Nile, and were in

close communication with the Hittite city of Hebron in the south of Palestine. That would be their own city, but their capital would probably by the same as the old Egyptian capital at Memphis when they were well-established.

They were credited with having invented the Semitic alphabet of 22 letters, which (through the Phoenicians) is the the parent of all modern alphabets. Their invention probably helped in the process of converting old Egyptian Hieroglyphics from picture-writing to phonetic writing. As the Hyksos had close relations with Hebron in Palestine, and Abraham and Israel had settled in the Palestine country, a nexus would be established, by which the first Israelites would be attracted to Zoan in Egypt.

It must also be remembered that southern Palestine was a poor country and subject to frequent famines, while Deltaic Egypt was well-watered by the Nile, and suffered famines only on the rare occasions when the Nile failed to inundate. The attraction of Egypt for the famine-stricken lands of the neighborhood would therefore be strong. And this is proved in the story of Joseph and his brethren.

Can we form even a rough idea of the dates of the Hyksos occupation?

At the latest the Hyksos period ended about 1600 B.C. Renan is therefore probably not far wrong when he places the Hyksos occupation about 2000 B.C. Possibly a date between 2000 B.C. and 1600 B.C. may be nearer the mark. If we suppose Joseph to have been the Wazir of one of the Hyksos Pharaohs in the Delta, there is no great violence of probabilities in the suggestion, as Joseph and the Hyksos would be of kindred races. In that case Joseph's date would fall somewhere between the 19th and 17th century B.C.

No reference to Joseph or Moses has been found in Egyptian records. The solitary reference to Israel (Ysraer, r-I) in stele of Mer-en-Ptah or Mineptah (about 1225 B.C.) seems to refer to Israel in Palestine rather than to Israel in Egypt. At this we need not wonder, as the Pharaoh who honored Joseph was, strictly speaking, only a foreigner. When the reaction against the Hyksos took place and the Hyksos were overthrown, the Egyptian would not probably be anxious to remember the interrupted period or to

preserve its memory. The Pharaoh who "knew not Joseph" looked upon Israelites as contemptible slaves, nor worthy of a thought except when they revolted, and then only as a despised race fit to be punished and kept in its place. It may be noticed, however, that the land of Goshen in which Israel dwelt and multiplied between the time of Joseph and the time of the Exodus, was a frontier tract of Egypt in the neighborhood of the Hyksos city of Zoan in the Delta.

In seeking the approximate date of Moses, we must again look to the probabilities of Egyptian history. It was formerly the received opinion that Rameses II (say about 1250 B.C.) was the Pharaoh who oppressed Israel in Egypt, and that the exodus may have taken place under his immediate successor Mineptah (say about 1225 B.C.). the vigorous policy of Rameses II and the spirit of his time would be consistent with this view.

But this date is almost certainly too late. There are indications pointing to the Israelites having already been settled in Cannan by this time. The Hyksos were turned out by the XVIIIth Dynasty, which established the New Empire in the 16th century B.C. Thothmes I (Tethmosis I, about 1540 B.C.) is more likely, in the first flush of his nationalist campaign, to have oppressed the Israelites and led to the exodus. His date fits in better. And his character also accords with the description in sacred history,. He centralized the monarchy and made it a military autocracy. Militarism went with the lust of war and foreign conquest. He carried his arms as far as the Euphrates. Slaves, plunder, and foreign tribute made Egypt opulent and arrogant, and he added many monuments to Thebes. We can imagine him in his splendid Court, scarcely paying any attention to Mosses, and viewing all his complaints with an amusement mingled with contempt and impatience. But retribution was to come in Allah's good time. The men who followed Allah's message- Israel in the time of Solomon (a little after 1000 B.C.), and more completely, the Muslim in the time of 'Umar and his successors-became lords of the East and the West (Quran 7:137), and ancient Egypt's were eventually buried in the sands.

It was this same Pharaoh, Thothmes I, who took for his partner on the Throne his daughter Hatshepshut. If

Thothmes was the Pharaoh in Moses' story, we may suppose that it was this same celebrated strong-minded lady, pharaoh's daughter, who found the child Moses (Exod, 2:10), and brought him to her mother to be adopted into the family (Quran 28:9).

Like her father, she was a great supporter of the national cults. Moses was nurtured in the palace, and learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians, then reputed to be the wisest of nations. With their own wisdom he foiled them. Thus in Allah's Plan the enemies of Allah and the enemies of Israel (Quran 20:39) were the very ones who were used as instruments for the purpose of Allah and the salvation of Israel.

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Appendix V

Egyptian Religion and its Steps Towards Islam

(see 7:123, n. 1082)

This should be read alongwith Appendix IV in which a discussion of Egyptian chronology will be found.

Allah's Plan works silently but surely among all nations and at all times. In the most fantastic forms of religion appear gleams of His Light of Unity, calls to Islam, i.e. man's submission of his will to the Will of Allah (see C. 7-10).

From that point of view, the religious history of Egypt from the most ancient times to the present day is most interesting, as is indeed the religious history of any country for which we have records of thought and development. That of India touches us dearly, but it is not directly relevant in a translation and exposition of the Quran.

The religious history of Israel is just an earlier chapter of the history of Islam, and our doctors and commentators have written in great detail about it. Sometimes, I think, have attached exaggerated importance to it. But none of them has paid much attention to Egypt from this point of view. Our people know very little of ancient Egypt and have shown little interest in it. It is a healthy sign that modern Egypt is showing much interest in it, and I hope that it will in time recognize in it a valuable unfoldment of religious ideas leading up to Islam.

The field of Egyptology is vast and is being extended everyday by the diligent researches of archaeologists and scholars. I do not propose to write an essay on Egyptian religion. But I wish to put forward a few considerations to show how Allah's Plan and Will worked steadily, in Egypt as elsewhere, towards a greater and greater appreciation, on the part of the people, of Allah's true nature and the real purpose of religion.

The eternal light of Unity and Islam shines in many ways, and its rays give light to the spiritual aspiration of mankind in the darkest periods. With a gifted and artistic people like the Egyptians, their religious sense was led, in spite of many rebuffs, gradually to a purer and purer conception of man’s eternal destiny, until Muhammad’s Message was preached to them in the very language in which it was originally preached in Arabia. And that language, Arabic, became and is now the language of the Egyptian people themselves.

In the pre-Dynastic Egypt, there must already have been a great deal of development in the religious conceptions which afterwards showed such vitality to Dynastic Egypt.

The Old Kingdom, including the Pyramid Period, shows that the Egyptian mind was obsessed with the certainty of life after death. It was also impressed with ideas of grandeur, order, and precision in the universe-ideas which found eloquent expression in the grand conceptions and mathematical symmetry and simplicity of its architecture. Its massive dignity and repose are

also reflected in the faces and poses of the figures in Egyptian statuary and painting.

The unending expanse and the mystery of the desert seem to have acted on the Egyptian mind like a soporific and made it less active in mundane affairs and less practical in speculation than that of some other races of similar gifts. What mysteries are typified in the proportions of the Pyramids and their internal galleries and mysterious chambers, we shall probably never know with certainty. But a haunting sense of death and of the other world seems to oppress us in its atmosphere, as it does in the grim senses of the "Book of the Dead". As Prof. T.E. Peet remarks (Cambridge Ancient History, vol I, p. 354),

"the Egyptian mind closely associated together men, gods, and the dead as merely three species of a single genus."

Each of these is considered was subject to an irresistible force called Hike or Heka: hence the force of Magic, Incantations to the Dead, and Rites and Formularies in daily life.

The Middle Kingdom brings us face to face with fresh ideas. We have no data with which to appraise the influence of foreign cults and foreign ideas during the period. But knowing, as we do, how Egypt acted as a magnet to the world at large and how many points of contact the Euphrates valley civilizations and the Nile valley civilizations had with each other, we may well suppose a broadening of Egyptian culture and civilization in consequence. The Hyksos may have been Egyptianised in Egypt, but they could not have failed in their turn to contribute Syrian as Semitic ideas to Egypt.

Among these were Monotheism, a patriarchal organization of society, and an impatience of priestly or caste denomination. These must have contrasted strangely with the chaotic Pantheon of countless deities, the lash-driven slaves living huddled in the cities, and the dedicated priests and richly endowed temples, which catered for the privileged few, but lived by the sweat of the brow of the unprivileged many.

The New Empire was the flowering period of Egyptian genius and requires special consideration. The crudities of the old pre-Dynastic chaotic Pantheon had been in process of attrition through the centuries. Local gods tended to be absorbed into general gods. Some sort of rationalism and spiritualization had

been going on throughout the Dynastic period. A process of systemization and unification was now consciously undertaken. The primitive worship of animals had gradually been transformed into a system of animal gods, with human bodies and animal heads.

The human bodies represented the anthropomorphic tendencies, while the animal heads became types of qualities. For example,

- Anubis, with the dog emblem, was the doorkeeper, the messenger, the custodian of the dead.

- Apis, or Hapis, the sacred bull of Memphis, symbolized the renewal of life, he was identified with Osiris;

  there were great rejoicing when a new Apis (a black bull calf) was found, and great mourning and costly burial when one died.

- Thoth, the god of wisdom and magic, was symbolized by an ibis, that stately, mute, mysterious bird of passage in the Nile valley.

In addition to the symbolism of animals, there was the worship of the great phenomena of nature, the Nile, the giver of agricultural bounties to Egypt, and the sun, which, as the god Ra, became the supreme god in Egypt.

Then there was the myth of Osiris the good, who came to the earth for the benefit of mankind, was killed by the magic of Set, the power of evil, and reign as the judge of the dead in the lower world. His faithful wife Isis and his falcon-eyed son Horus figure in the mysteries. It is possible that the Osiris myth itself arose from a myth of the Nile, or the sun.

There was a gradual perception of Monotheism, a realization that Allah is One and above names. But the picturesque forms, festivals, and representations remained, and as the priests of all grades enjoyed special privileges and monopolized knowledge and learning, the people remained ignorant. They were exploited and practically enslaved.

It was in the midst of such conditions that Moses came. He came to rescue his own people from the bondage of Egypt, a task which he performed. But it must not be forgotten that his

mission was also addressed to the king of Egypt, and to the people of Egypt. Here also he sowed the seed, although he did not reap the fruit. The king, the Pharaoh, was almost looked upon as a god, and looked upon himself as a god. He had to be humbled, and he was humbled.

Bur Allah's purpose is not merely to humble. It is also to lead from darkness to light. If the particular Pharaoh was too hard hearted to respond, his descendant in the fifth or sixth generation made a public confession of the One True God, as we shall see presently.

What of the people?

The wise men of Egypt, who were confronted with Moses, repented of their deceit, and saw the light by the Grace of Allah, according to the Quranic narrative. Though they were threatened and perhaps martyred, their fate must have opened the eyes of the people and prepared them for the remarkable religious revolution which we shall now proceed to describe.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus was probably Thothmes I (about 1540 B.C.). the Pharaoh Amenophis IV (about 1350 B.C.) adopted the worship of the One Supreme God as the State religion. He had been a high priest of the Sungod at Heliopolis, but had begun to look upon the multiplicity of gods in the Egyptian Pantheon as a blot on Egyptian religion. His original name had been Ahmen-hotep ("Ammon is satisfied") as being devoted to Ammon the great god of the State religion at Thebes. He changed the name to Akhan-Aton ("Pious to Aton") and worshipped the Supreme God under the name of Aton. He abandoned the city of Thebes as being devoted to Ammon and founded a new city near the site of what is now Tel al Amarna, between Thebes and Memphis, and dedicated it to Aton the Supreme God.

The clay tablets discovered at Tel al Amarna in 1887 throw much light on the relations of Egypt with her tributaries in Syria. The alphabet on the tablets is the Cuneiform of Assyria: the language is Semitic, and closely akin to Hebrew. unfortunately the religious revolution of Amennophis IV did not last.

The city was only inhabited twenty years. His second son-in-law and successor, Tutankh Aton, carried out a counter-revolution.

He went back from Aton to the cult of Ammon. The recent finds from his tombs show what exquisite skill the artists and artisans of Egypt had been attained. The pure religion remained established on the throne only for two generations but we need not suppose it was rooted out of the minds of the people.

The later Dynasties, XXI to XXXI, saw the decay of Egypt as a Power. The Assyrian and Persian invasions ultimately extinguished the freedom of Egypt. With the coming of Alexander the Great (332m B.C.) and the foundation of the city of Alexandria, a new era dawned on the culture of Egypt. It mingled with Greek and other thought, and became cosmopolitan in nature. Already in the time of Herodotus, the sensitive Greek mind had been impressed with the mystery and wisdom of Egypt. It now made the soil of Egypt cosmopolitan in religion, culture, and philosophy.

The Ptolemaic dynasty held a broadly tolerant attitude, and even imported the rites of Serapis from the Black Sea and assimilated him to Apis the Bull of Memphis. The new cult of Serapis widely over the East, and later, when Egypt came under the Roman Empire (30 B. C.), into the very heart of the Empire. The Serapion in Alexandria, with its famous library, became for a few centuries the true intellectual centre of the world.

The very unfavorable picture drawn of Egyptian religion in Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* must be referred to the somewhat hybrid cult of Isis as practiced in foreign lands rather than to Egyptian religion generally. What course real Egyptian religion took in this period we have no means of judging accurately. In the light of earlier and later events we may suppose that the steady honest industrious Egyptian peasantry and people went on pursuing the even tenor of their career with the same mystic longing for a practical religion which was preparing them for purer forms of worship and a juster distribution of the fruits of labour.

Alexandria in the first centuries of the Christian era was resounding with the shouts of every kind of philosophy and the teaching of every kind of religious sect, from East and West, North and South, but mainly from the East, which was ever been a nursery of religious ideas. A special quarter was assigned to the Jews in the city. It became the true centre of Hellenised Judaism, and may claim Josephus among its

disciples. Neo-Pythagoreanism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, and Manichaeism found a home there Mithraism, which was so widely spread in the Roman Empire, especially in the army, in the first three centuries A.C., was probably represented on its philosophic side in Alexandria. Its intermixture of races, creeds, philosophies, and religions, produced an atmosphere of chaos, which was not cleared until the advent of Islam.

But from a religious point of view our greatest interest in Egypt in the first seven centuries of the Christian era is in the development of Christianity itself. It is difficult to say even when exactly Christianity began to displace the older Egyptian cults. But when Christianity was well-established, we find Egypt one of its most important centres. But the new Christianity which was evolved out of the ruins of the Christ's simple teaching had four distinct attitudes towards organization, speculative doctrine, asceticism and mysticism.

1. The native Egyptians or Coptic Church was contemplative, ascetic, and mystical. Monasticism became so rampant that it seriously affected the growth of population and degraded the position of women.
2. The Alexandrian school developed on Greek lines-political, ambitious, speculative, philosophical, and liable to break up into numerous sects and heresies, each party trying to dominate and put down the others as heretical by the strong arm of the law.
3. The Bishop of Rome, when the seat of the Empire was transferred to Constantinople in 330, gradually developed political power in Italy. He inherited the Roman genius for organization, and the invasion of the Germanic tribes gave him an opportunity not only of extending the Roman Catholic Church over the whole of Central and Western Europe, but of establishing the Church as superior to the state when the Papacy became an established political power.
4. The Orthodox Eastern Church , and all the sects which it fought in the East, tended ultimately to vanish before the advance of Islam. Had it not been for the vast Slav territories over which it obtained sway, in and around Russia and afterwards in Siberia, the Orthodox Eastern

Church would have been reduced to a negligible position like the Coptic Church in Egypt. With pretensions to rule the State, it had yet become, in Kingley's words in Hypatia, the "stipendiary slave-official" of the Empire.

But we are anticipating. Before the Roman Catholic Church parted from the Orthodox Eastern Church, the united Church fought with and suppressed many so-called "heresies", some of which represented the view of primitive Christianity, and the scene of many of these doctrinal fights was in Egypt.

The one that interests us most is Aryanism. Arius was an Alexandrian Presbyter early in the fourth century A.C. and fought hard for the doctrine of Unity, the simple conception of the Eternal God, as against all the hair splitting and irrational distinctions in the nature and persons of the Godhead, which finally crystallized in the doctrine of the Trinity, propounded and maintained with much personal acrimony by Athanasius.

Athanasius himself was born in Alexandria and became Bishop of Alexandria. He may be counted as the father of Orthodoxy (as now understood by Christianity) and the real systematiser of the doctrine of the Trinity-"three in one and one in three." Up to the third century A.C. the Unitarians had been in the majority in the Christian Church, though subtle metaphysicians had started dispute as to the meanings of "God becoming man." The Logos or the Word, the Power of Allah, whether the Father and the Son were of the same substance or of similar substance, whether the Son could be said to have been created by the Father, and numerous questions of that kind. They do not interest us now, but they rent the Christians world into many jarring sects until the mission of our Holy Prophet dissipated the mists and reestablished the doctrine of Unity on a firm and rational basis.

As I have said, the Christian Churches in the East, as well as the Germanic nations which came later into the fold, adhered to Unity although not in the pure form which was made clear in the Holy Quran. The issue was joined between Arius and Athanasius, and the first General Council on the Christian Church, that of Nicaea (in Bithynia) in 325, decided against Arius and Unitarianism.

The controversy, however, still continued to rage until 381, when the Council of Constantinople, called by the Emperor Theodosius the Great, confirmed the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity and declared it to be the only Orthodox one. Though controversies, protests, and persecutions continued long afterwards, we may take that date as the date of the fall of Christianity. Even in Western Christianity, as late as 496, Clovis, the Frankish king, was the only Christian sovereign sophisticated enough to follow the subtle doctrine of the Trinity. The others were brought into line by political power later.

The Christian creed became narrower and narrower, less and less rational, more and more inclined in use earthly weapons to suppress the eternal truth of Allah.

In 415 the Jews were expelled from Alexandria. In the same year and in the same city the beautiful, modest, eloquent philosopher and mathematicians, Hypatia, was murdered-an outrage against both rationalism and the intellectual and religious position of woman in human society. The murder was a particularly brutal one. She was dragged from her chariot in the streets, stripped naked, and suffered a lingering death in a Christian Church. Her body was then cut to pieces and burned.

The worst features of the crime was the complicity of the Patriarch of Alexander, who was not only the chief religious dignitary of the Orthodox Church in Egypt but the de facto repository of political power. Meanwhile the native Christian community-the Coptic Church-which had all along clung to the Monophysite doctrine, a corrupt form of Unitarianism, was out of the pale, and its members were held down as a depressed class by their Orthodox brethren. The latter also, basking in official sunshine, collected power and property into their own hands. As Kingsley remarks in Hypatia, the Egyptian Church

"ended as mere or false, were equally heretical in their mouths because they used them as watchwords for division."

The social conditions produced an amount of discontent, for which the redress came only with the advent of Islam.

It was for this reason that the Copts and the inhabitants of Egypt generally welcomed the forces of Islam under 'Amr as deliverers in 639 A.C. the power was taken over by the victorious army of Islam from Cyrus (called Muqawqas in Arabic

through the Coptic), the Patriarch of Alexandria, but it was used by the army of deliverance to enlarge the liberties of the Egyptians, to admit them into the universal brotherhood of Islam, and to improve the resources of the country for the benefit of the people. Except a negligible remnant of conservatives, the Egyptians as a nation accepted the religion, the language, and the institutions of the Arabs and embarked on a new course of history, which it is necessary to follow further in this note.

It should be remarked, however, that what happened in Egypt happened generally in western Asia. The jarring sectarian irrational religious gave place before the triumphant religion of Unity and Brotherhood, and the Byzantine Empire receded and receded until it was swept out of existence. The feeble efforts made by the Emperor Leo the Isaurian in 726-731 to restrict the use of images were a reflection of the puritanical zeal of Islam. But they did not succeed in the area of his authority, and they completely alienated the Papacy from the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Bishop of Rome had been consolidating his power, and in the person of Gregory I (590-604) had already assumed the control of Italy and was seeking the aid and support of the Barbarian invaders who eventually became the pillars of the Papacy.

The final and open rupture between the Orthodox Eastern Church and the Roman Catholic Church took place in 1054. but the earlier dates are remarkable. After the birth of the Holy Prophet of Islam the disruption of the Orthodox Christian Church (which had now become an anachronism) began.

When Islam was making its triumphant march in the 8th century after Christ, the original (Greek) Church began to take some steps to puts its own house in order. But it had lost its mission, and the new Islamic people took its place. The Western Church has since worked on definitely new lines, and its offshoots among the Protestant Church have consciously or unconsciously, been influenced by the broad principles of Islam.

What the course of future religion may be and how Allah will unfold His All-Wise Plan is not given to us mortals to know.

In the Islamic Brotherhood many changes have taken place and are taking place. Egypt, in spite of her many vicissitudes in the Islamic period, is in the intellectual forefront among the Arabic-speaking nations of Islam. We pray that her people may be guided, through their educational, cultural, and religious channels, to work with a new spirit for the progress of Islam and the glory of Allah.

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C. Kingsley's novel Hypatia gives a good picture of social and religious conditions in Christian Egypt in the fifth century. On the identity of al Muqawqas (Pkauchios) with Cyrus,

see Dr. A.J. Butler's "Arab Conquest of Egypt." (Oxford 1902), pp. 508-562.

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Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Appendix VI

Who was Dhu al Qarnayn?

(see 18:83-98)

As stated in my note 2428 to 18:83, I do not consider that historical or geographical considerations have much bearing on a story treated as a Parable, as Dhu al Qarnayn's story is.

Indeed all stories or narrations are referred to in the Quran as Parables, for their spiritual meaning. Heated controversies or dogmatic assertions as to precise dates, personalities, or localities, seem to me to be out of place. But a great deal of literature has been piled up among our writers on the subject, and it seems desirable to set down a few notes as to the different views that have been expressed.

What is the meaning of the name or title Dhu al Qarnayn- "Lord of two Qarns"?

"Qarn" may mean:

1. a horn in the literal sense, as in the case of a ram or bull.
2. a horn in a metaphorical sense, as in English, the horns of a crescent, or by a further metaphor (not used in English), the home of a kingdom or territory, two portions at opposite ends.
3. by another metaphor, a summit, a lock of hair, typifying strength, a crest such as Eastern Kings wear on their diadems;
4. referring to time, an Epoch, an Age, a Generation.

Meaning

- is inapplicable to a man or a great king: but see the next paragraph about Alexander the Great.

The other three meanings may be applicable, as implying:

- Lord of East and West, Lord of wide territory or of two kingdoms;
- Lord of two crests on his diadem, typifying two kingdoms, or a rank superior to that of an ordinary king;
- Lord of more than one Epoch; one whose power and influence extend for beyond his life time.

If we accept the popular identification of Dhu al Qarnayn with Alexander, all the three latter designations would be applicable to him,

- as he was lord of the West and East, lord of the Greek States united for the first time (Hellenic Captain-General) and of the widely extended Persian Dominion which included all Western Asia, Egypt, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Punjab (at least portions).

- He is represented on his coins with two horns on his head: he considered himself a sun of Jupiter Ammon (who had the two horns of a ram), with a divine mission. He revolutionized the history of Europe, Asia, and Africa (Egypt), and his influence lasted for many generations after his death at the young age of 33. he lived from B.C. 356 to 323, but his name was one to conjure with for many centuries after him.

It was not only on account of his political power, but his cultural influences. Through his conquests, Greek art gave the impulse to Gandhara art in Central Asia and Northern Asia and Northwest India. The city of Alexandria which he founded in Egypt became the cultural centre, not only for Greece and Rome, but for Judaism and Christianity, and retained its supremacy till the sixth century of the Christian era. Justinian closed its schools of philosophy in 529. its philosophic and scientific schools spread their influence over even a wider area than the Mediterranean basin.

Now the generality of the world of Islam have accepted Alexander the Great as the one meant by the epithet Dhu al Qarnayn. But some of our Ulama have raised doubts about it and made other suggestions.

- One is that it was not the Macedonian Alexander the Great, but an earlier prehistoric king contemporary with Abraham; because they say Dhu al Qarnayn was a man of Faith (18:88-98), while Alexander the Great was a Pagan and believed in Grecian gods.

  An identification with a supposed prehistoric king, about whom nothing is known is no identification at all.

  On the other hand, all that is known about Alexander the Great shows that he was man of lofty ideals, he died over three centuries before the time of Jesus, but does not mean he was not a man of Faith, for Allah revealed Himself to men of all nations in all ages.

  Alexander was a disciple of the philosopher Aristotle, noted for his pursuit of sound Truth in all departments of thought. Alexander's reference to Jupiter Ammon may have been no more than a playful reference to the

superstitions of his time. Socrates spoke of the Grecian gods, and so did Aristotle and Plato; but it would be wrong to call them idolaters or men without Faith. In the Ethiopic traditional stories of Alexander the Great, he is represented as great prophet.

- Another suggestion made in the Dhu al Qarnayn was an ancient king of Persia.

  A king of Persia is referred to as a Ram with two horns in the book of Daniel (8:3) in the Old Testament. But in the same Book, the Ram with the two horns was smitten, cast down to the ground, and stamped upon by a he-goat with one horn (8:7-8).

  There is nothing in our literature to suggest that Dhu al Qarnayn came to any such ignominious end.

  Nor is the Book of Daniel an authority worth consideration. Its authenticity is very doubtful. There is no question that it is a patchwork as parts of it are in the Aramaic (or Chaldee) language and parts in Hebrew, and there are in it a number of Greek words.

  The Septuagint version contained large additions. "Daniel" whoever the writer or writers were-refers to historical Persian kings. If it is argued that it was some old prehistoric Persian king who built the Iron Gates (18:96) to keep out the Gog and Magog tribes (18:94), this is no identification at all. There is no unanimity about the identity of the Iron Wall or the Gog and Magog tribes.

  Both these subjects will be referred to presently.

Another suggestion made is that he was some old prehistoric Himyrite king from Yemen about whom nothing else is known. This, again, is no identification at all.

The question of Yajuj and Majuj (Gog and Magog) and the iron barrier built to keep them out is of some interest. It is practically agreed that they were the wild tribes of Central Asia which have made inroads on settled kingdoms and Empires at various stages of the world's history. The Chinese Empire suffered from their incursions and built the Great Wall of china to keep out the Manchus and Mongols. The Persian Empire suffered from them at various times and at various

points. Their incursions into Europe in large hordes caused migrations and displacements of population on an enormous scale, and eventually broke up the Roman Empire. These tribes were known vaguely to the Greeks and Romans as "Scythians", but that term does not help us very much, either ethnically or geographically.

If we could locate the iron barrier or iron gates referred in to in 18:96, we should have a closer idea of the tribes whom the barrier was meant to keep out.

It is obvious that the Great Wall of china is out of the question. Begun in the third century B.C. and continued later, it covers the enormous length of 1,500 miles, and goes up the hills and down the valleys, with towers 40 feet high at intervals of 200 yards. Its average height is 20 to 30 feet. It is built of stone and earth. There is no particular point in it which can be identified with the iron barrier in the text. No one has suggested that Dhu al Qarnayn was a Chinese Emperor, and none of the great Conquerors of Western Asia can be credited with the building of the Chinese Wall.

The Barrier in the text must have been more in the nature of iron gates than an iron wall. Two Iron Gates, geographically far apart, have been suggested in the alternative. Sometimes they have been mixed up by writers not strong in geography. Both of them have local associations with the name of Alexander the Great. Both are near a town Derbend, and have borne the name of Bab al Hadid (Arabic for "Iron Gate"). Let us examine the case of each in turn.

The best known in modern times is at the town and seaport of Derbend in the middle of the western coast of Caspian Sea. It is now in Soviet territory, in the district of Daghistan. Before the southern expansion of Russia in 1813 it belonged to Persia. A spur of Mount Caucasus here comes up north, close to the sea. The Wall in question is 50 miles long, with an average height of 29 feet. As Azerbaijan (in Persia) is not far from this place, some writers have mixed up the Derbend Iron Gate with Azerbaijan, and some with the Caucasian town of Kharz (Kars) which is to the south of the Caucasus.

There are local traditions here, and in the Astrakhan region at the mouth of the river Volga, higher up the Caspian, connecting this Caucasian Iron Gate with the name of

Alexander, but there are good reasons why we should reject this as the site of the Iron Gate in the Quranic story.

1. This does not correspond exactly to the description in 18:96 ("the space between the steep mountain sites"); the gap is between the mountain and the sea.

2. Alexander the Great (assuming that Dhu al Qarnayn is Alexander), is not known to have crossed the Caucasus.

3. there is an Iron Gate which corresponds exactly to the description, in a locality which we know Alexander to have visited.

4. in the early days, when Muslims spread to all parts of the world, local legends were started by ignorant people connecting the place they knew with places referred to in Quran.

We now come to the Iron Gate which corresponds exactly to the Quranic description, and has the best claim to be connected with Alexander's story, it is near another Derbend in Central Asia, Hissar District, about 150 miles southeast of Bukhara. A very narrow defile, with overhanging rocks, occurs on the main route between Turkistan and India;: latitude 38 degree N; longitude 67 degree E.

It is now called in Turkish Buzghol-Khana (Goat-house), but was formerly known as the Iron Gate (Arabic, Bab al Hdid; Persian, Dar-i-ahani; Chinese The'ie-men-kaun.

There is no iron gate there now, but there was one in the seventh century, when the Chinese traveler Hiouen Tsiang saw it on his journey to India. He saw two folding gates cased with iron hung with bells. Nearby is a lake named Iskandar Kul, connecting the locality with Alexander the Great. We know from history that Alexander, after his conquest of Persia and before his journey to India, visited Sogdiana (Bukhara) and Maracanda (Samarqand). We also know from Muqaddasi, the Arab traveler and geographer, who wrote about A.H. 375 (A.C. 985-6) that the Abbasi Khalifa Wathiq (842-846 A.C.) sent out a mission to Central Asia to report on this Iron Gate. They found the defile 150

yards wide: on two jambs, made with bricks of iron welded together with molten lead, were hung two huge gates, which were kept closed. Nothing could correspond more exactly with the description in 18:95-96.

If, then, the Barrier in 18:95-96 refers to the Iron Gate near Bukhara, we are able to proceed to a consideration of the Gog-Magog people with some confidence. They were the Mongol tribes on the other side of the Barrier, while the industrious men who did not understand Dhu al Qarnayn's language were the Turks, with their agglutinative language, so different from the languages then spoken in Western Asia.

The Barrier served its purpose for the time being. But the warning that the time must come when it must crumble to dust has also come true. It has crumbled to dust. Long since, the Mongols pushed through on their westward journey, pushing the Turks before them, and the Turks became a European Power and still have a footing in Europe.

We need not bother about the legends of the Gog and Magog people. They were reputed to be giants, and two tiny hills in flat Cambridge shire are derisively called the Gog-Magog hills! Similarly the statues of Gog and Magog in the Guildhall in London, which Mawlvi Muhammad Ali takes so seriously, only remind us how legends are apt to grow and get transported to strange places.

In the Alexander legends of medieval Europe, Gog and Magog are said to have come with 400,000 men to the help of Porus whom Alexander defeated, and to have fled after that defeat. They fled to the mountains, and Alexander built a wall with brass gates to prevent their interruptions.

See Paul Meyer, Alexandre le Grand dans la literature francaise du Moyen Age: Paris 1886; Vol 2, pp. 386-389.

Personally, I have not the least doubt that Dhu al Qarnayn is meant to be Alexander the Great, the historic Alexander, and not the legendary Alexander, of whom more presently.

My first appointment after graduation was that of Lecturer in Greek history. I have studied the details of Alexander's extraordinary personality in Greek historians as well as in modern writers, and have since visited most of the localities

connected with his brief but brilliant career. Few readers of Quranic literature have had the same privilege of studying the details of his career.

It is one of the wonders of Quran, that, spoken through an Ummi's mouth, it should contain so many incidental details which are absolutely true. The more our knowledge increases, the more we feel this. There are little touches which need not have been mentioned. They come in incidentally like the incidental remarks of a person full of knowledge, who does not intend to put forward these points but whose fullness of knowledge brings them in inevitably.

One such point occurs in the mention of Alexander's westward journey (18:86). He saw the sun set in a piece of murky water which is described as a "Spring".

Most commentators have understood the "spring" to be the sea, and the "murky water" to be its dark-blue water.

Nizami, in his Romance of Alexander, takes Alexander right west along North Africa to Andalusia and the Atlantic Ocean. There is no historic proof that Alexander ever reached the Atlantic. But he was of course familiar with the deep-blue waters of the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean interpretation may pass if we had not a closer explanation. Alexander's first exploits were when he was a mere boy, in the reign of his father Philip. The region of Illyricum was due west of Macedonia, and Macedonia's first expansion was in that direction. The town of Lychnis was annexed to Macedonia and thus the western frontier of Macedonia was secured.

The Northern frontier towards the Danube had already been secured, and the lesson he subsequently gave to Thebes secured him against attack from the Greek States to the south, and prepared the way for his great march east against the Persian Empire. To the west of the town of Lychnis is a lake 170 square miles in area, fed by underground springs that issue through limestone rocks and give out murky water. Both town and lake are now called Ochrida, about 50 miles west of Monastir. The water is so dark that the river which forms the outlet of the lake to the north is called the Black Drin.

Looking at the sunset from the town, the observer would see the sun set in a pool of murky water (18:86). It was a question before the boy Alexander-the dreamy, impulsive, fearless rider-whether he would put the barbarous Illyricans to the sword or show them mercy. He showed true discrimination and statesmanship. He punished the guilty but showed kindness to the innocent, and thus consolidated his power in the west. This I construe to be the meaning of 18:87; otherwise these verses do not seem to be perfectly clear.

Another point may be noted.

- The three episodes mentioned are the journey to the west,
- the journey to the east, and
- the journey to the Iron Gate.

The journey to the west I have just explained.

The journey to the east was to the Persian Empire. Here he found a people who lived in the open and wore little clothing. This might apply to people who live in an island place in the latitude of Persepolis or Mutani. He left them alone as they were (18:91). He was not warring against populations; he was warring against proud but effete Persian Empire. He left them as they were, with their local institutions, and under their local chiefs. In feeling, he treated them as his own, not as alien.

In some things, he himself adopted their ways. His followers misunderstood him. But Allah understood, for he approves of all things that lead to Unity among mankind.

The direction of the third journey is not mentioned.

The commentators suggest the north, but they might with better reason have suggested the south, as Alexander visited Egypt. But the visit to the Iron Gate was to the East - a continuation of his journey east. That is why the direction is not mentioned again.

Here his mission was different. He had to protect a peaceful industrious population, whom perhaps the Persian Empire had failed to protect, against turbulent and restless invaders.

He helped them to protect themselves, but warned them that all human precautions, though good and necessary, are vain without Allah's help.

Each of the episodes mentioned is historical. But the pomp and glitter of military conquest are not mentioned. On the contrary, spiritual motives are revealed and commended. We need not know or learn any history or geography or science or psychology or ethics to understand them. But the more real knowledge we have, the more completely shall we understand them and the lessons to be drawn from them. The earthly journeys are treated as mere symbols to show us the evolution of a great and noble soul which achieved so much in a short earthly life.

His career was so extraordinary that it impressed his contemporaries as a world event. It undoubtedly was one of the greatest world events in history. Legends began to grow up round his name. in many cases the legends overlaid the history.

Today the world is thrilled by Sir Ayrel Stein's identification of Aornos, a very small geographical detail in a great career full of lessons, in political, ethical, and religious wisdom. But the generations immediately following Alexander's period wrote and transmitted all sorts of wonderful legends that passed current in East and West.

The philosopher Kallisthenes had been with Alexander in Asia. Under his name was produced a Greek book in Alexander some time before the second century of the Christian era. It was translated into Latin in the third century. Translations were subsequently made into most of the "wight that hath discretion" (the Monk in Canterbury Tales).

Alexandria was a focus of Christian and Jewish learning for some centuries. The Christians also made Alexander a saint.

The Jews carried the Alexander cycle into the East.

Our Persian poet Jami (A.H. 535-599. A.C. 1141-1205) worked in up into his epic Iskandar-nama. He is careful to show the historical or semi-historical and the ethical parts separately. The one relates to action or exploits (Iqbal) and

the other to wisdom (Khird). He had the advantage of the Quranic story before him.

That story mentions three historical episodes incidentally, but draws out attention to matters of the weightiest spiritual significance, and that is the chief thing to note in the story.



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Appendix VII

Thamud Inscriptions at al Hijr

(see 26:141-159; 15:80-84; 7:73-79)

Mr. C.M. Doughty traveled in Northwestern Arabia and Najd in the 19880's, and his book Arabia Deserta form one of the most notable of Arabian travel books. It was first published in two volumes by the Cambridge University Press in 1888, and has recently gone through several editions. The edition I have used is the unabridged one-volume edition printed in London in 1926. the reference in this Appendix should be understood to refer to that edition.

Doughty travelled on the old Pilgrim Caravan from Damascus as far as Mada'in Salih, and then parted company with the Pilgrims and turned into Najd. Mada'in Salih (the Cities of Salih), is one of the stations on the Syrian Pilgrimage route, about 180 miles north of Madinah.

Tabuk, to which the Holy Prophet led an expedition in A.H. 9 (see introduction to Surah 9), is about 170 miles farther to the northwest, and Ma'an Junction about 150 miles still farther.

Mada'in Salih's was also an important station on the prehistoric gold and frankincense (bakhur) route between Yemen and Egypt on Syria. In sacred history it marks the ruined site of the Thamud people to whom the prophet Salih was sent, whose she-camel was a symbolic Sign and is connected with Salih's history. See note 3208 to 26:155-157. To the west and Northwest of Mada'in Salih are three Harrat or tracts of volcanic land covered with lava, stretching as far as Tabuk.

This is how Doughty describes his first view of Mada'in Salih, approaching from the northwest.

"At length in the dim morning twilight, as we journeyed, we were come to a sandy brow and a straight descending place betwixt cliffs of sandstones. There were some shouting in the forward, and Aswad bid me look up, 'this was a famous place, Mabrak al Naqah'" (the kneeling place of the she-camel of Salih).

"It is short, at first steep, and issues upon the plain of al Hijr, which is Mada'in Salih; where the sun coming up showed the singular landscape of this valley plain, encompassed with might sandstone precipices (which here resemble ranges of city walls, fantastic towers, and castle buildings), and upon them lie high shouldering sand drifts. The bottom ia sand, with much growth of desert bushes; and I perceived some thin sprinkled volcanic drift. Westward is seen the immense mountain blackness, terrible and lowering, of the Harrat." (Arabia Deserata, p. 83, vol. 1).

Doughty took some rubbings of some of the inscriptions which were accessible to him and they were studied by the great Semitic scholar M. Ernest Renan and published by the Academic des Inscriptions et Belles-Letters. Renan's Report in French is printed as an Appendix to Chapters IV, V, and VI of Arabia Deserta (pp. 180-187, vol 1) and M. le Marquis de Vofgue's Note (also in French) on the Nabataean sculptured Architecture at Mada'in Salih at pp. 620-623, vol 1.

The general result of these studies may be summarized. The sculpture and architecture are found to be of the same kind as the Nabataean monuments at Petra (for which see note 1043 to 7:73).

At Petra there are no dated Inscriptions preserved, but at Mada'in Salih we have several.

There are at Mada'in Salih perhaps 100 sepulchral rock-hewn chambers, in some of which are found human bones and remains, showing that the Nabataeans knew the art of embalming, and used linen of the same kind as was used in ancient Egypt.

The tombs are dedicated in perpetuity to named families, and the named Nabataean kings have, each the epithet "loving his people". There are flat side-pilasters, and the figures of four-footed beasts, eagles, and other birds are discernible.

Besides the sepulchral chambers, there is a great Hall or Council Chamber (Diwan), 25 ft x 27 ft x 13 ft. this may have been a Temple.

The gods worshipped there were those whose names we know from other Nabataean sources-Dusares, Martaba, Allat, Manat, Ka'bah'is, and Hubal. Allat, Manat, and Hubal are also known to us in connection with the idols of the Pagan Quraysh of the times of Ignorance. It is interesting to find the word Mesjeda (Arabic Masjid) already used here for "place of worship". Triads of stones were worshipped as gods.

The Inscriptions have dates from 3 B.C. to 79 A.C. within this short period of 82 years we can see something of the

development of Semitic paleography. The writing becomes more and more cursive with the years, we have here a central point between Old Armenian, Square Hebrew, Palmyran, Sinaitic, Kufi and Naskh.

We may treat the Nabataeans as historical, as we have established dates. The Thamud were prehistoric, and occupied sites which were afterwards occupied by the Nabataeans and others.

The kneeling place of Salih's she-camel (Mabrak al Naqah) and the well of the she-camel (Biru al Naqah), and a number of local names keep alive the race memory of an ancient Arabic people and their prophet Salih.



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Appendix VIII

First Contact of Islam with World Movements

The contemporary Roman and Persian Empire

(see 30:2-7 and Notes)

1. The conflict between the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius and the Persian King Khasrau Parwiz (Chosroes II) is referred to in Surah 30. (Al Rum). It will therefore be convenient

now to review very briefly the relations of those two great Empires and the way in which they gradually decayed before the rising sun of Islam. The story has not only a political significance, but a deep spiritual significance in world history.

2. If we take the Byzantine Empire as a continuation of the Empire that grew out of the Roman Republic, the first conflict took place in B.C. 53, when the Consul Crassus (famous for his riches) was defeated in his fight with the Parthians. If we go back further, to the time of the Greek City-States, we can refer back to the invasion of Greece by Xerxes in B.C. 480-479 and the effective repulse of that invasion by sea and land by the united cooperation of the Greek States. The Persian Empire in those days extended to the western (Mediterranean) coast of Asia Minor. But as it included the Greek cities of Asia Minor, there was constant intercourse in war and peace between Persia and Hellenic (Greek) world. The cities in Greece proper had their own rivalries and jealousies, and Greek cities or parties often invoked the aid of the Great King (Shahinshah of Persia) against their opponents. By the Peace of Antalcidas, B.C. 387, Persia became practically the suzerain power of Greece. This was under the Achaemenian Dynasty of Persia.

3. Then came the rise of Macedonia and Alexander's conquest of the Persian Empire (B.C. 330). This spread the Hellenic influence as far east as Central Asia, and as far south as Syria (including Palestine), Egypt, and and Northern Africa generally. Rome in its expansion westwards reached the Atlantic, and in its expansion eastwards absorbed the territories of Alexander's successors, and became the mistress of all countries with a Mediterranean seacoast. The nations of the Roman Empire "insensibly melted away into the Roman name and people "(Gibbon, chap ii).

4. Meanwhile there were native forces in Persia which asserted themselves and established (A.C. 10) the Dynasty of the Arsacids (Ashkanian). This was mainly the outcome of a revolt against Hellenism, and its spear point was in Parthia. The Arsacids won back Persia proper, and

established the western boundary of Persia in a line drawn roughly from the eastern end of the Black Sea southwards to the Euphrates at point northeast of Palmyra. This would include the region of the Caucasus (excluding the Black Sea coast) and Armenia and Lower Mesopotamia, in the Persian Empire. This was the normal boundary between Persia and the Roman Empire until the Islamic Empire wiped out the old Monarchy of Persia and a great part of the Byzantine Empire, and annexed Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and gradually Asia Minor, finally extinguishing the whole of the Byzantine Empire.

5. Another stage in Persian history was reached when the Arsacids were overthrown and the Sasanians came into power under Ardshir 1, A.C. 225. the Sasanian Empire was, in a sense, a continuation of the Achaemenian Empire, and was reaction against the corruptions of the Zoroastrian religion which had crept in under the Parthian Dynasty of the Arsacids. But the religious reforms were only partial. There were some interaction between Christianity and the Zoroastrian religion. For example, the great mystic Mani, who was painter as well as religious leader, founded the sect of Manichaeism. He flourished in the reign of Shapur 1 (A.C. 241-272) and seems to have preached a form of Gnostic faith, in which Alexandrian philosophy was mixed with Christian doctrine and the old Persian belief in the dual principle of Good and Evil. The Sasanians failed to purify religion and only adhered to fire-worship in arrogance, luxury, sensuality, and monopoly of power and privilege, which is the office of Religion to denounce and root out. That office was performed by Islam.

6. When the seat of the Roman Empire was transferred to Constantinople (Byzantium) in the time of Constantine (A.C. 350), the conflict between Rome and Persia became more and more frequent. The true Peninsula of Arabia was never conquered either by Rome or by Persia, although its outlying parts were absorbed in either the one or the other at various times. It is interesting to notice that the Roman Emperor Philip (A.C. 244-249) was a born Arab and that the architecture of the Nabataeans in the city of Petra and

in Hijr shows a mixture of Roman, Greek, Egyptian, and indigenous Arab cultures.

7. Arabia received the cultural influences of Persia and the Byzantine Empire, but was a silent spectator of their conflicts until Islam was brought into the main currents of world politics.

8. The Yemen coast of Arabia, which was easily accessible by sea to Persia, was the battle-ground between the Persian Empire and the Abyssinian Empire just across the Red Sea. Abyssinia and Arabia had had cultural and political relations for many centuries. Amharic, the ruling language of Abyssinia, is closely allied with Arabic, and the Amharic people went as colonists and conquerors from Arabia through Yemen. Shortly before the birth of the Holy Prophet, Abyssinia had been in occupation of Yemen for some time, having displaced a Jewish dynasty. The Abyssinians professed the Christian religion, and although their Church was doctrinally separate from the Byzantine Church, there was a great deal of sympathy between the Byzantines and the Abyssinians on account of their common Christian religion.

   One of the Abyssinian viceroys in Yemen was Abrahah, who conceived the design of destroying the Temple at Makkah. He led an expedition, in which elephants formed a conspicuous feature, to invade Makkah and destroy the Ka'bah. He met a disastrous repulse, which is referred to in the Quran (Surah 105). This event was in the year of the Prophet's birth, and marks the beginning of the great conflict which enabled Arabia eventually to obtain a leading place among the nations of the world.

   The year usually given for the Prophet's birth is 570 A.C., though the date must be taken as only approximate, being the middle figure between 569 and 571. the extreme possible limits.

   The Abyssinians having been overthrown, the Persians were established in Yemen, and their power lasted there until about the 7th year of the Hijrah (approximately 628 |A.C..), when Yemen accepted Islam.

9. The outstanding event in Byzantine history in the 6th century was the reign of Justinian (527-565) and in Persian history the reign of Anawshirwan (531-579). Justinian is well-known for his great victories in Africa and for the great Digest he made of Roman Law and Jurisprudence. In spite of the scandalous life of his queen Theodora, he occupies an honourable place in the history of the Roman Empire.

   Anawshirwan is known in Persian history as the "Just King". They were contemporary rulers for a period of 34 years. In their time the Roman and Persian Empires were in close contact during peace and war. Anawshirwan just missed being adopted by the Roman Empire. If the adoption had come off, he would have become one of the claimants to the Byzantine throne. He invaded Syria and destroyed the important Christian city of Antioch in 540-541. it was only the able defence of Belisarius, the Roman general, which saved the Roman Empire from further disasters in the east.

   On the other hand the Turanian Avars, driven in front of the Turks, had begun the invasion of Constantinople from the western side. Justinian made an alliance with the Abyssinians as a Christian nation, and the Abyssinians and the Persians came to conflict in Yemen. Thus world conditions were hemming in Arabia on all sides. It was Islam that not only saved Arabia but enabled it to expand and to play a prominent part in world history after the annihilation of the Persian Empire and the partial destruction of the Byzantine Empire.

10. The sixth century of the Christian era and the first half of the seventh century were indeed a marvelous period in the world's history. Great events and transformations were taking place throughout the then known world. We have referred in the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire which dominated the civilized portions of Europe, Africa and Western Asia.

    The only two other countries of note in history in those days were India and China.

In India there was the glorious period of Harsha Vardhana (606-647 A.C.), in which art, science, and literature flourished, political power was on a healthy basis, and religious enquiry was bringing India and China into closer relationship. The famous Chinese Buddhist traveler Yuang-Chwang (or Yuang Tsang or Hsuan-Tsang) performed his pious pilgrimage to India in 629-45.

In China, the glorious The'ang Dynasty was established in 618. the Chinese art of that Dynasty led the world. In political power, China extended from the Pacific in the east to Persian Gulf on the west. There was unity and peace, and China-hitherto more or less isolated-received ambassadors from Persia, Constantinople, Magadha, and Nepal, in 643. but all this pomp and glitter had in it the seeds of decay.

Persia and Byzantine collapsed in the next generation. India was in chaos after Harsha's death. The Chinese Empire could not long remain free from the "Barbarians": the Great Wall, begun in the third century B.C., was soon to be out of date. By about 683 the Khitans from the northwest and the Tibetans from the south were molesting China.

The Germans, the Goths and the Vandals were pressing further and further into Roman Empire. From Asia, the Avars and the Turks were pressing both on the Romans and the Persians, and sometimes playing off the one against the other. The simpler and less sophisticated nations, with their ruder but more genuine virtues, were gaining ground. Into all that welter came the Message of Islam, to show up, as by galvanic action, the false from the truth, the empty from the eternal, the decrepit and corrupt from the vigorous and pure. The ground of History was being prepared for the New Birth in Religion.

11. Anawshirwan was succeeded on the Persian throne by an unworthy son Hurmuz (579-590). Had it not been for the talents of his able General Bahram, his Empire would have been ruined by the invasions of the Turks on one side and the Romans on the other. Eventually Bahram rebelled, and Hurmuz was deposed and killed. His son Khusraw Parwiz

(Chosroes II) took refuge with the Byzantine Emperor Maurice, who practically adopted him as a son and restored him to the Persian throne with Roman arms.

Khusraw reigned over Persia from 590 to 628. it was to him that the Holy Prophet addressed one of his letters, inviting him to Islam towards the end of his life. It is not certain whether the letter was actually delivered to him or to his successor, as it is nor easy to calculate precisely synchronous dates of the Christian era with those of the earliest years of the Hijrah era.

12. In Arabic and Persian records the term Kisra refers usually to Khusraw Parwiz (Chosroes II) and sometimes to Khusraw Anawshirwan (Chosroes I), while the term Khusraw is usually treated as generic - as the title of the Kings of Persia generally. But this is by no means always the case.

    "Kisra" is an Arabic form of "Khusraw".

    The name of Anawshirwan has been shortened from the time of Firdawsi onwards to Nushirwan. The Pehlevi form is Anoshek-ruwan, "of immortal soul'.

13. The Roman Emperor Maurice (582-602) had a mutiny in his army, and his capital revolted against him. The army chose a simple centurion called Phocas as Emperor and executed Maurice himself. The usurper Phocas ruled from 602 t0 610, but his tyranny soon disgusted the Empire, Heraclius, the governor (exarch) of a distant province in Africa, raised the standard of rebellion, and his young son, also called Heraclius, was sent to Constantinople to depose Phocas and assume the reins of power. It was the younger Heraclius, who ascended the throne of Constantinople in 610 and ruled till 642, who figures in Muslim history as Hiraql.

14. Khusraw Parwiz called himself the son of the Emperor Maurice. During his refuge at Constantinople he had married a Byzantine wife. In Nizami's Romance she is known as Maryam. According to some historians she was a

daughter of the Emperor Maurice, but Gibbon throws doubts on that relationship.

In any case, he used the resources of the Persian Empire to fight the usurper Phocas. He invaded the Byzantine Empire in 603. the war between the Persians and the Romans became a national war and continued after the fall of Phocas in 610. the Persians had sweeping victories, and conquered Aleppo, Antioch, and the chief Syrian cities, including Damascus in 611.

Jerusalem fell to their arms in 614-615, just 8 to years before the sacred Hijrah. The city was burnt and pillaged, the Christians were massacred, the churches were burnt, the burial place of Christ was itself insulted, and many relics, including the "true Cross" on which the Christians believed that Christ had been crucified, were carried away to Persia.

The priests of the Persian religion celebrated an exultant triumph over the priests of Christ. In this pillage and massacre the Persians were assisted by crowds of Jews, who were discontented with the Christian domination, and the Pagan Arabs to whom any opportunity of plunder and destruction was in itself welcome.

It is probably this striking event-this victory of the Persians over the Roman Empire-which is referred to in Surah 30 (Al Rum) of the Quran. The Pagan Arabs naturally sided with the Persians in their destructive zeal, and thought that the destruction of the Christian power of Rome would also mean a setback to the Message of the Prophet, the true successor of Jesus. For our Holy Prophet had already begun his mission and the promulgation of Allah's Revelation in A.C. 610. while the whole world believed that the Roman Empire was being killed by Persia, it was revealed to him that the Persian victory was short-lived and that within a period of a few years the Romans would conquer again and deal deadly blow to the Persians. The Pagan Arabs, who were then persecuting the Holy Prophet in Makkah, hoped that their persecution would destroy the Holy Prophet's new Revelation.

In fact both their persecution and the deadly blows aimed by the Persians and the Romans at each other were

instruments in Allah's hands for producing those conditions which made Islam thrive and increase until it became the predominant power in the world.

15. The Persian flood of conquest did not stop with the conquest of Jerusalem. It went on to Egypt, which was also conquered and annexed to the Persian Empire in 616. The Persian occupation reached as far as Tripoli in North Africa. At the same time another Persian Army ravaged Asia Minor and reached right up to the gates of Constantinople. Not only the Jews and Pagan Arabs, but the various Christian sects which had been persecuted as heretics by the Romans, joined in the fray and helped the Persians. The condition of Heraclius became indeed pitiable. With all these calamities, he had to deal with the Avars who were attacking from the other side of Constantinople, which was practically in state of siege. Famine and pestilence added to the horrors of the situation.

16. In these desperate circumstances Heraclius conceived a brilliant plan. He knew that the Persians were weak in sea power. He used his sea-power to attack them in the rear in 622 (the year of Hijrah). He transported his army by sea through the Aegean Sea to the bay just south of the Taurus Mountains.

    He fought a decisive battle with the Persians at Issus, in the same plain in which Alexander the Great had defeated the Persians of his day in his famous march to Syria and Egypt. The Persians were taken by surprise and routed. But they had still a large forces in Asia Minor, which they could have brought into play against the Romans if Heraclius had not made another and equally unexpected dash by sea from the north.

    He returned to Constantinople by sea, made a treaty with the Avars, and with their help kept the Persians at bay around the capital. Then he led three campaigns, in 623, 624, and 625, along the southern shore of the Black Sea and took the Persians again in the rear in the region round Trebizond and Kars. Through Armenia, he penetrated into Persia and got into Mesopotamia. He was now in a position to strike at the very heart of the Persian Empire. A decisive

battle was fought on the Tigris near the city of Mosul in December 627. before this battle, however, he had taken care to get the alliance of the Turks and with their help to relieve Constantinople in 626 against the Persians and the treacherous Avars who had then joined the Persians.

17. Heraclius celebrated the triumph in Constantinople in March 628. peace was then made between the two Empires on the basis of the status quo ante. Heraclius, in pursuance of a vow he had made, went south in the autumn to Emessa (Himis) and from there marched on foot to Jerusalem to celebrate his victories, and to restore to its place the Holy Cross which had been carried away by the Persians and was returned to the Emperor as a condition of peace.

    Heraclius's route was strewn with costly carpets, and he thought that the final deliverance had come for his people and his empire.

    Either on the way, or in Jerusalem, he met a messenger from the Holy Prophet carrying a letter inviting him to the True Faith as renewed in the living Messenger of the age. He apparently received the message with courtesy. But he did not realize the full import of the new World which was being shaped according to Allah's plans, and the future that was opening through the new Revelation. Perhaps in his heart he felt impressed by the story which he had heard from the Arabs about the Holy Prophet, but the apparent grandeur of his empire and the pride of his people prevented him from openly accepting the renewed Message of Allah. He caused a search to be made for any Arab who was sufficiently acquainted with the Prophet to tell him something about him. Abu Sufyan was then trading in a caravan in Syria. He was a cousin of the Prophet, and belonged to the Umayyah branch of the family. He was sent for to Jerusalem (Aelia Capitolina).

18. When Abu Sufyan was called to presence of Heraclius, the Emperor questioned him closely about this new Prophet. Abu Sufyan himself was at that time outside Islam and really an enemy of the Prophet and his Message. Yet the story he told - of the truth and sincerity of the Holy

Prophet, of the way in which the poor and lowly flocked to him, of the wonderful increase of his power and spiritual influence, and the way in which people who had once received the Light never got disillusioned or went back to their life of ignorance, and above all the integrity with which he kept all his covenants - made a favourable impression on the mind of Heraclius. That story is told in dramatic detail by Bukhari and other Arabian writers.

19. The relations of the Persians Monarch with Islam were different. He -either Khusraw Parwiz or his successor- received the Holy Prophet's messenger with contumely and tore up his letter.

"So will his kingdom be torn up."

Said the Holy Prophet when the news reached him.

The Persian Monarch ordered the Governor in Yemen to go and arrest the man who had so far forgotten himself as to address the grandson of Anawshirwan on equal terms.

When the Persian Governor tried to carry out his Monarch's command, the result was quite different from what the great Persian King of Kings had expected. His agent accepted the truth of Islam, and Yemen was lost as a province to the Persian Empire and became a portion of the new Muslim State.

Khusraw Parwiz died in February 628. he had been deposed and imprisoned by his own cruel and undutiful son, who reigned only for a year and a half. There were nine candidates for the Persian throne in the remaining four years. Anarchy reigned supreme in the Sasanian Empire, until the dynasty was extinguished by the Muslim victory at the battle of Mada'in in 637. the great and glorious Persian monarchy, full of pride and ambition, came to an ignominious end, and a new chapter opened for Persia under the banner of Islam.

20. The Roman Empire itself began to shrink gradually, losing its territory, not to Persia, but to the new Muslim Power which absorbed both the ancient Empires. This Power arose in its vigour to proclaim a new and purified creed to

the whole world. Already in the last seven years of Heraclius's reign (635-642) several of the provinces nearest to Arabia had been annexed to the Muslim Empire. The Muslim Empire continued to spread on, in Asia Minor to the north and Egypt to the south. The Eastern Roman Empire became a mere shadow with a small bit of territory round its capital. Constantinople eventually surrendered to Muslims in 1453.

21. That was the real end of the Roman Empire. But in the wonderful century in which the Prophet lived, another momentous Revolution was taking place. The Roman Pontificate of Gregory the Great (590-604) was creating a new Christianity as the old Christianity of the East was slowly dying out. The Patriarch of Constantinople had claimed to be the Universal Bishop, with jurisdiction over all the other bishops of Christendom. This had been silently but gradually questioned by the Popes of Rome. They had been building up a liturgy, a church organization and a body of discipline for the clergy, different from those of the Holy Orthodox Church. They had been extending their spiritual authority in the Barbarian provinces of Gaul and Spain. They had been amassing estates and endowments. They had been accumulating secular authority in their own hands.

    Pope Gregory the Great converted the Anglo-Saxon invaders of Great Britain to his form of Christianity. He protected Italy from the ravages of the Franks and Lombards and raised the See of Rome to the position of a Power which exercised ample jurisdiction over the Western world. He was preparing the way for the time when one of his successors would crown under his authority the Frankish Charlemagne as Emperor of Rome and of the West (A.C. 800), and another of his successors would finally break away from the Orthodox Church of Constantinople in 1054 by the Pope's excommunication of the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Greeks. (See the last paragraph in Appendix V.)

References:

Among Western writers, the chief authority is Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: mainly chapters 40-42, and 45-46; I have given references to other chapters in the body of this Appendix: his delineation of the characters of Heraclius and Chosroes II is brief but masterly.

L. Drapeyron's French monograph, L'Empereur Heraclius (Paris, 1869) throws further light on an interesting personality.

A.J. Butler's Arab Conquest of Egypt (Oxford, 1902) gives a good account of Heraclius.

The famous French dramatist Corneille has left a play of Heraclius, but it turns more on an intricate and imaginary plot in the early life of Heraclius than on the character of Heraclius as Emperor.

Nizami, in his Khusraw-o-Shirin (571 H, 1175-66 A.D.) makes reference at the end of his Romance to the Holy Prophet's letter to the Persian King, and does attempt in the course of the Romance a picture of the King's character. He is a sort of wild Prince Hal before he comes to the throne. Shirin is an Armenian princess in love with Khusraw; she marries Khusraw after the death of his first wife Maryam, daughter of the Roman Emperor, and mother oft undutiful son who killed Khusraw and seized his throne.

Among the other Eastern writers, we find a detailed description of the interview of Abu Sufyan in Bukhari's Sahih (book on the beginning of Inspiration): the notes in the excellent English translation of Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss) are helpful.

Tabari's History is as usual valuable.

Mirkhond's (Khawind-Shah) Rawdah al Safa (translated by Rehatsek) will give English readers a summary (at second hand) of the various Arabic authorities.

Mawlana Shibli's otherwise excellent Sirah al Nabi is in this respect disappointing.

Mawlana Zafar Ali's Ghalaba-i-Rum (Urdu, Lahore, 1926) is interesting for its comments.

A note on the Persian capitals may be interesting. So long as Persia was under the influence of the Semitic Elamites, the chief residence of the rulers was at Susa, near the modern Dizful, about 50 miles northeast of Shustar. In the Medic or Median period (say B.C. 700 t0 550) the capital was, as we should expect, in the highlands of Media., in Ecbatana, the site of the modern city of Hamadan, 180 miles west of modern Tihran. Ecbatana remained even in Sasanian times the summer capital of Persia. With the Achae menians (B.C. 550-330) we come to a period of full national and imperial life. Susa was the chief Achaemenian capital from the time of darius I onwards, through Persepolis (Istakhr) in the mountain region near modern Shiraz, and about 40 miles northeast of Shiraz, was used as the city of royal burial. Alexander himself, as ruler in Persia, died in Babylon, later when the centre of gravity moved north and northeast, other sites were selected.

The Arsacids (Ashkanian) or Parthians were a tribal power, fitly called in Arabic the muluk al Tawaif, and had probably no fixed or centralized capital. The Saqsanian took over a site where there were a number of cities, among which were Ctesiphon and Seleucia on opposite banks of the river Tigris. This site is about 45 miles north of the old site of Babylon and 25 miles below the later city of Baghdad. Ctesiphon

and Seleucia were Greek cities founded by one of Alexander's successors, Seleucia being named after Seleucus.

This complex of seven cities was afterwards called by the Arabic name of Madain (the Cities). The Takht-i-Kisra (or Arch of Ctesiphon) still stands in a ruinous condition on this site. This seems to have been the chief capital of the Sasanians at the Arab conquest, which may be dated either from the battle of Qadisiyah or tha of Mada'in (Both fought in 637 A.D.), after which Persia which then included 'Iraq came into Muslim Empire. The Abbasi Empire built Baghdad for its capital under Mansur in 762 A.D. when that Empire was broken up in 1258 A.D., there was some confusion for two centuries. Then a national Persian Empire, the Safawi (1499-1736) arose, and Shah Salim established his capital in the northwest corner in Tabriz. Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1628) had his capital at the more central city of Ispahan (or Isfahan). After the Safawi dynasty confusion reigned again for about four decades, when the Afghans were in the ascendant. When the Qachar (or Qajar) dynasty (1795-1925) was firmlty established under Agha Muhammad Khan. Tihran (Tehran) near the Caspian, where his family originated, became the capital, and it still remains the capital under the modern Pehlvi Dynasty.



الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Appendix IX

Comparative Chronology of the Early Years of Islam

(see paras 8 and 11 of Appendix VIII)

The dates after the Hijrah, when given according to the Arabian Calendar, can usually be calculated exactly according to other Calendars, but it is not possible to synchronize exactly the earliest dates of the Arabian Calendar with the dates of the Christian Calendar, and for two reasons.

- In the first place, there seems to have been some discrepancy between the Calendars in Madinah and in Makkah.
- In the second place, the Arabian Calendar was roughly luni-solar, before the years of the Farewell Pilgrimage (Dhu al Hijjah, 10 H. i.e. March 632).

The Pagan Arabs were in the habit of counting months by the appearance of the moon, but irregularly intercalating a month once in about three years to bring the calendar up into conformity with the seasons.

They did not do it on any astronomical calculations or on any system, but just as it suited their own selfish purposes, thus often upsetting all the old-established conventions about the months of peace and security from war and thus getting an unfair advantage for the clique in power in Makkah over their enemies (see note 1295 to 9:36).

Unless exact mathematical calculations are applied and reduced to a well-established system, there is apt to be confusion, and this can well be taken advantage of by arbitrary cliques in power.

After the Holy Prophet's adoption of the purely lunar calendar for ecclesiastical purposes, there is no confusion. Every date after A.H. 10 is exactly convertible into a corresponding date in any other accurate calendar. Wustenfeld's and other Comparative Tables of Muslim and Christian dates may therefore be relied upon for dates after A.H. 10, but much caution is necessary in synchronization foe earlier dates.

Mawlana Shibli, in his Sirah al Nabi, Vol I, p124 (edition of 1336 H., 1918 C.), adopts for the Prophet's Birthday the date 20th April 571, following Mahmud Pasha. They go the basis of an astronomical event, the total eclipse of the sun that was visible in Madinah on the day that the Prophet's son Ibrahim was taken to the mercy of Allah. But there is no agreement among the authorities as to the exact date either by the Christian or the Arabian Calendar. Shibli, following Mahmud Pasha, takes the date of the eclipse to be the 7th November 632. Muir (Life, ed. 1923, p. 429), assumes some date in June or July 631.

L. Caetani (Chronographica Islamica, A. H. 10) gives the date of the eclipse as 4th or 5th July 631, which he synchronizes with the 28th or 29th of Rabi 1, A.H. 10, but the quotes authorities for the death of Ibrahim as on the 16th June 631, synchronizing it with the 10th of Rabi 1, A.H. 10. there is something wrong here, as the death and the eclipse occurred on the same day.

Waqidi gives the month as Rabi 1, A.H. 10, and gives Ibrahim a life of 15 months. But if Abu Dawud and Bayhaqi are correct, Ibrahim lived only 2 months and 10 days, and as his date of birth is given in Dhu al Hijjah A.H. 8, the date of death according to these authorities would be in Rabi 1, A.H. 9. on a review of all the authorities I feel inclined to accept the date for the eclipse and death of Ibrahim as 28th or 29th of Rabi 1, A.H. 10 i.e. 4th or 5th July 631. but this cannot be asserted with certainty.

The French work of reference, Lart de verifier les dates, Paris 1818 (Vol. I, p. 310), gives the date of the solar eclipse as the 3rd of August 631, 2:30 P.M. and according to the system adopted in that book, the corresponding Hijrah date would be the 28th Rabi 2, A.H. 10.

Even if this particular date was certain and exact, a certain amount of uncertainty remains in counting dates backwards. Most authorities assume a purely lunar year of 254 days for working backwards.

Probably the Muslims in Madinah counted in this way even before the lunar year was fixed exactly in A.H. 10. but the mass of Pagan Arabs in Makkah and elsewhere probably were all the time intercalating a month roughly once in three years, as has been stated before, until their power was utterly destroyed by the conquest of Makkah; and therefore precise exactitude in pre-Conquest date or in the counting of people's ages in years before 8-10 A.H. is unattainable.

See a note on this subject in MKargoliouth's Life of the Prophet (p. xix. Of the 3rd edition) and in Muir's Life (p. x. of the 1923 edition).

The date of the actual Hijrah as given in Caetani may be accepted as September-October 622, being in the month of Rabi 1 if the ninth of that month would be accepted as the date of departure from the cave of Thawr, the best synchronized date would be the 22nd of September 622 C. but as the first month of the Arab year was (and is) Muharram, the Hijrah year 1 is counted as beginning on the 15th or 16th July 622 (1 Muharram A.H. 1).

The formal adoption of the Hijrah era in official documents date from the Khalifah of Umar-from the year 17-18 H. according to Tabari.

Sir Wolseley Haqig's Comparative Tables of Muhammadan and Christian Dates (London, Luzac, 1932), gives in a handy form three comparative Tables which enable the synchronization of Hijrah years from A.H. 1 to A.H. 1421.

The main table for these years was printed earlier at the end of S. Haim's New English-Persian Dictionary, Tehran, 1931. the exact title of Wustenfeld's German Tables is: Wustenfeld-Mahler, Vergleichungs-Tabellen, Leipzig, 1926 (2nd edition).

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

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Appendix X

Ancient Forms of Pagan Worship

(See 71:23, note 5721)

1. From prehistoric times man has sought to worship powers of nature, or symbols representing those symbols. In vulgar minds they become debased superstitions, and seem to come into competition with the worship of the the one True God.
2. The five names mentioned in 71:23 represent some of the oldest Pagan cults, before the Flood as well as after the Flood, though the names themselves are in the form in which they were worshiped by local Arab tribes. The

names of the tribes have been preserved to us by the Commentators, but thy are of no more than archeological interest to us now. But the names of the false gods are interesting to us from the point of view of comparative religion, as, under one form or another, such cults still exist in countries which have not accepted the Gospel of Unity, as they have always existed since man turned from his Maker and Sustainer to the worship of created things or invented fancies.

3. The names of the five false gods and the symbols under which they were represented were as follow:

Nos	Pagan god	Shape	Quality Represented
1.	Wadd	Man	Manly Power
2.	Suwa	Woman	Mutability, Beauty
3.	Yaghuth	Lion or Bull	Brute Strength
4.	Yauq	Horse	Swiftness
5.	Nasr	Eagle, or Vulture, or Falcon	Sharp Sight, Insight

It is not clear whether these names are to be connected with true Arabic verbal roots or are merely Arabicised forms of names derived from foreign cults as those of Babylonia or Assyria, the region of Noah's Flood. The latter supposition is probable. Even in the case of Wadd (Affection, Love) and Nasr (Eagle) which are good Arabic words, it is doubtful whether they are not, in this connection, translations or corruptions of words denoting foreign cults.

4. In studying ancient comparative mythologies we must never forget the following facts.

i. Men's ideas of God always tend to be anthropomorphic. The qualities which they admire they transfer to their godhead.

ii. But fear in primitive man also leads to the transfer of anything mysterious or imagined to be injurious, to the Pantheon. Such things have to be placated in order that they may not injure man. Thus, in popular Hinduism the goddess of smallpox, which causes terror over an ignorant countryside, has to be worshipped, placated, or appeased with sacrifice.

iii. This leads to the worship of animals noxious to man, such as serpent worship, which has prevailed and still prevails in many primitive areas. In ancient Egyptian mythology the Crocodile (so common in the Nile), the Dog, the Bull, and the Ibis were worshipped both literally and symbolically.

See Appendix V.

iv. But as men's knowledge grows, and they observe the wonderful heavenly bodies and their motions, they began to feel their sublimity, beauty and mystery, and they transfer their worship to the heavenly bodies. The first great astronomers in the ancient world were the Babylonians and Chaldaeans. Among them was Abraham's homeland.

The allegory of Abraham (6:74-82 and notes) points to the importance of the cult of the worship of heavenly bodies and the fallacy in them.

"It is those who believe, and confuse not their beliefs with wrong-that are truly in security, for they are on right guidance" (6:82).

The Sabaean worship of heavenly bodies in Arabia had probably its source in Chaldaea (see last paragraph of note 76 to 2:62).

v. A further refined step in Paganism is to worship abstractions, to treat concrete things as symbols of abstract qualities which they represent. For example,

the planet Saturn with its slow motion was treated as phlegmatic and evil.

The planet Mars with its fiery red light was treated as betokening war and havoc and evil, and so on.

Jupiter, with its magnificent golden light, was treated as lucky and benignant to any who came under its influence.

Venus became the symbol and goddess of carnal love.

The Pagan Arabs erected Time (Dahr) into a deity, existing from eternity to eternity, and dispensing good and ill fortune to man.

The ancient Aegean religion treated the vital principle in the same way, as spontaneous and eternal, and traces of all this are found in many religions, ancient and modern.

vi. The next step was to reincarnate as it were these qualities in beings of flesh and blood, with lives, feelings, and passions like those of ordinary men and women, and to fill up a confused Pantheon with gods and goddess that quarreled, hated, loved, were jealous, and suffered or enjoyed life like human beings.

In such a Pantheon there was room for demi-gods and real human heroes that were worshipped as gods.

The Greek poets and artists were past masters in carrying out this process, under cover of which they discussed profound human problems with great power. They made religion dramatic. While they gained in humanism, they lost the purer spiritual conceptions which lift the divine world far above the faculties and crimes of this life.

Hierarchical Christianity has suffered from this inheritance of the Greek tradition.

vi. Where there was a commingling of people and culture, several of these ideas and processes got mixed up together. Gods and goddess of different origins were identified with one another, e.g.

Artemis, the chaste virgin huntress goddess of the Greek Pantheon, was identified with Diana of the Romans,

Diana of the Ephesians (representing the teeming life of nature), and Selene the cold moon-goddess.

Similarly Diana was identified with the Egyptian Isis, and Diana's twin brother Apollo (the sun) with the Egyptian Osiris.

Forces of nature, animals, trees, qualities, astronomical bodies, and various other factors got mixed up together; and formed a shapeless medley of superstitions, which are all condemned by Islam.

5. To revert to the worship of the heavenly bodies. The countless fixed stars in the firmament occupied always the same relative positions in the heavens, and did not impress the imagination of the ancients life the objects which stood out vividly with mysterious laws of relative motion.

   A few individual stars did attract the worshippers attention; eg

   Sirius the Dog star, the brightness fixed star in the heavens, with a bluish tinge in its light, and

   algol the variable star, being Beta of the constellation Perseus, whose variation can be perceived by the naked eye in two or three nights,

   became connected with many legends, myths, and superstitions.

   It is probably Sirius that is referred to as the fixed star in the parable of Abraham (6:76). With regard to the fixed stars in their myriads, the astronomers turned their fancy to devising Groups or Constellations.

   But the moving "star", or planets, each with its own individual laws of motion, stood out to them personified, each with a motion and therefore will or influence of its own. As they knew and understood them, they were seven in numbers. Viz.

   1. and 2 the moon and the sun, the two objects which most closely and indubitably influence the tides, the temperature, and the life on our planet;

3. and 4 the two inner planets, Mercury and Venus, which are morning and evening stars, and never travel far from the sun; and

5, 6 and 7 Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, the outer planets, whose elongations from the sun on the ecliptic can be as wide as possible.

The number seven became itself a mystic number, as explained in note 5526 to 65:12.

6. It will be noticed that the sun and the moon and the five planets got identified each with a living deity, god or goddess, with characteristics and qualities of its own. The solar myth was a myth of very fruitful vitality, and got mixed up with many other myths and ideas.

   In late Roman religion it appears in the story of Apollo, the sun god of light and learning and of manly beauty, twin brother to Diana the moon goddess.

   In ancient Egypt it appears in the myth of Horus, the falcon-eyed, or Ra or Re, the eye, which sees all things, further the eagle, or falcon, or hawk became itself identified with the sun, with its piercing light.

   The sun myth mixes itself up with the myth of the Nile and with the cycle of legends connected with Isis and Osiris, who were subsequently identified with the moon and the sun divinities.

   In Babylon the name Shamash (Arabic Shams) proclaims the glory of the sun god corresponding to the old Sumerian Utu of Babbar, while the hymns to Surya (the sun) in the Rig-Veda and the cult of Mithra in Persia proclaim the dominance of sun-worship.

7. Moon-worship was equally popular in various forms. I have already referred to the classical legends of Apollo and Diana, twin brother and sister, representing the sun and the moon.

   The Egyptian Khonsu, traversing the sky in a boat, referred to the moon, and the moon legends also got mixed up with those about the god of magic. Thoth, and the Ibis.

In the Vedic, religion of India the moon-god was Soma, the lord of the planets, and the name was also applied to the juice which was the drink of the gods. It may be noted that the moon was a male divinity in ancient India; it was also a male divinity in ancient Semitic religion, and the Arabic word for the moon (qamar) is of the masculine gender.

On the other hand, the Arabic word for the sun (shams) is of the feminine gender. The Pagan Arabs evidently looked upon the sun as a goddess and the moon as a god.

8. Of the five planets, perhaps Venus as the evening star and the morning star alternately impressed itself most on the imagination of astro-mythology. This planet was in different places considered both male and female.

In the Bible (Isaiah, 14:12), the words "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, sun of morning!" are understood to refer to the Morning Star in first instance and by analogy to the King of Babylon.

The Fathers of the Christian Church, on the other hand, transferred the name Lucifer to Satan, the power of evil.

Mercury is a less conspicuous planet, and was looked upon as a child in the family, the father and mother being the moon and the sun, or sun or moon was the father and Venus the mother (the sexes being inter-changeable in the myths).

Of the three outer planets, Jupiter is the most conspicuous; indeed, after the sun and the moon, it is the most conspicuous object in the heavens, and was reputed to be beneficent and to bestow good fortune. The sun and the moon being considered in a class apart, Jupiter was considered the father of the planets, and possibly his worship got occasionally mixed up with that of the sun. Mars and Saturn, as has already been stated, were considered malevolent planets, to be feared for the mischief that they might do; for the Pagan Pantheons worshipped powers both of good and evil.

9. It is remarkable that the days of the weak are named after the seven planets of geocentric astronomy, and if we take them in alternate sequence they indicate the order in which their heavens were arranged with reference to proximity to the earth.

   The following table represents this grouping:-

Planet	Presiding god or goddess	Day of the week in alternate sequence
Moon	Diana	Sunday
Mercury	Mercury	Tuesday
Venus	Venus	Thursday
The Sun	Apollo	Saturday
Mars	Mars	Monday
Jupiter	Jupiter	Wednesday
Saturn	Saturn	Friday

   This alternate sequence is carried into a circle, as the total number is seven, itself a mystic number.

10. These cross-currents and mixtures of nature-worship, astral-worship, hero-worship, worship of abstract qualities, etc., resulted in a medley of debasing superstitions which are summed up in the five names,

    - Wadd,
    - Suwa,
    - Yaghuth,
    - Yauq, and
    - Nasr,

    as noted in paragraph 3 above.

The time of Noah is taken to be the peak of superstition and false worship, and and the the most ancient cults may thus be symbolically brought under these heads.

If Wadd and Suwa represented Man and Woman, they might well represent human self-glorification, the worship of Self as against Allah, or they might represent the worship of Manly Power and Female Beauty, or other abstract qualities of that kind.

On the other hand, it is possible that the worship of Jupiter and Venus itself not mixed up with the worship of the sun-moon pair. One pair being identified with another pair in a Septet, the number seven was reduced to five, and the five (itself a mystic number) might itself represent the seven planets as then worshiped.

Further, it may be that Nasr (the vulture, falcon, hawk, or eagle, the Egyptian Horus) also represents a solar myth, mixed up with the cult of the planets.

These cross-currents of astro-mythological mixtures of cults are well-known to students of ancient popular religions.

If the five names, from another angle of vision, represent qualities, the Wadd-Suwa pair (Sun-Moon, Jupiteer-Venus) would represent manly power and womanly beauty or mutability respectively, and the three remaining ones (paragraph 3) might represent Brute Strength, like that of a Bull or a Lion; Swiftness like that of a Horse or sharpness (of sight or intelligence) like that of a vulture, hawk, or eagle.

11. It may be noted that the five names of deities mentioned here to a represent very ancient religious cults are well-chosen, they are not the names of the deities best known in Makkah, but rather those which survived as fragments of very ancient cults among the outlying tribes of Arabia, which were influenced by the cults of Mesopotamia (Noah’s country).

The Pagan deities best known in the Ka'bah and round about Makkah were;

- Lat,
- Uzza, and
- Manat.

Manat was also known round Yathrib, which afterwards became Makkah. See 53:19-20.

They were all female goddesses.

Lat almost certainly represents another wave of sun-worship: the sun being feminine in Arabic and in Semitic languages generally. "Lat" may be the original of the Greek "Leto", the mother of Apollo the sun-god (Encyclopedia of Islam, I, p.380). If so, the name was brought in prehistoric times from South Arabia by the great Incense Route (note 3816 t0 34:18) to the Mediterranean.

Uzza probably represents the planet Venus.

The origin of Manat is not quite clear, but it would not be surprising if it also turned out to be astral.

The 350 idols established by the Pagans in the Ka'bah probably represented the 360 days of an inaccurate solar year. This was the actual "modern" Pagan worship as known to the Quraysh contemporary with our Prophet.

In sharp contrast to this is mentioned the ancient antediluvian worship under five heads, of which fragments persisted in out lying places, as they still persist in different forms and under different names in all parts of the world where the pure worship of Allah in unity and truth is not firmly established in the minds and hearts of men.

Reference:

The classical work on Arabian idol-worship in Ibn al Kalbi's Kitab all asnam, of the late second century of the Hijrah. The book is not easily accessible. Our doctors of religions have evinced no interest in the study of ancient cults, or in comparative religion, and most of them had not before them the results of modern archaeology. But a modern school school of Egyptian archaeologists is

arising, which takes a great deal of interest in the antiquities of their own country.

For astral worship consult Hastings Encyclopedia of religion and ethics, articles on "Sun, Moon, and Stars," as worshipped in different countries.

Consult also Sir W.A. Wallis Budge, Gods of the Egyptians, London 1904;

A.H. Sayce, religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylon.

Gifford Lectures, Edinburgh 1902:

M. Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, Boston 1898;

E.W. Hopkins, Religions of India, London 1896;

G.A. Barton, Sketches of Semitic Origins, New York 1902.

Any Classical Dictionary would give the details of Greek and Roman Mythology.

It is curious that the Indus Civilisation, which resembles the Second Pre-diluvian Culture of Elam and Mesopotamia, does not clearly disclose any signs of astral worship. But this study is still in its tentative stage. There is tree and animal worship, phallic worship, and worship of the great Mother-goddes. Animal worship regards strength, courage virility, or swiftness, as in the Pagan Arabian deities we have been considering. See Sir John Marshall, Mohenja Daro and the Indus Civilisation, 3 vols, London 1931.

Sir J.G. Frazer, in his Adonis, Attis, and Osiris (4th ed. London 1914, Vol I, pp. 8-9) refers to Allatru or Etresh-Kigal as "the stern queen of the internal regions" in Babylonian religion: she was the goddess of the nether regions, of darkness and desolation, as her counterpart Ishtar was the chief goddess of the upper regions, or reproduction and fertility, associated with the planet Venus.

الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds;

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Appendix XI

The Abbreviated Letters

(Al Muqattaat)

1. An oath is an invocation of the name of Allah or of some person object held sacred by the person using the invocation, to witness the truth of a solemn affirmation and to emphasize that affirmation.
2. An adjuration is a solemn appeal to a person or persons to do some act to believe some important statement by the evidence of something great or sublime or remarkable or out of the ordinary.
3. On these subjects as thus defined, let us review the teaching of the Holy Quran.
4. Among the Pagan Arabs the use of oaths became so common that it almost ceased to have any solemn meaning.

   On the other hand, when they wanted to suppress the rights of women or do some unjust acts, they would resort to an oath to do so, and then plead that they were bound by their oath when pressure was brought to bear on them to desist from their injustice.

   Thus, they doubly dishonour oaths: they took the name of Allah lightly, and on the other hand, they made an oath an excuse for not doing what was right and just. It is much to be feared that our own contemporaries are not free from such forms of disrespect to Allah.
5. Such practices are condemned in the strongest terms in the Quran. "Make not Allah's name an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons" (2:224).

Perjury is condemned as deception which hurts both the deceiver and the deceived.

"Take not your oaths to practice deception between yourselves, with the result that someone's foot may slip after it was firmly planted, and you may have to taste the evil consequences of having hindered men from the Path of Allah, and a mighty Wrath descend on you" (16:94).

See also 3:77.

You must not only fulfil your oaths, but you must fulfil all covenants, express or implied, and all your obligations of every kind, without reference to an oath: 5:1, note 682.

6. Considering the harm caused by thoughtless oaths, in which there was no intention to deceive or to do wrong. It is provided that they may be expiated for.

   "Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths, but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: for expiation feed ten indigent persons…or clothe them, or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn. But keep to your oaths" (5:92).

   See also 2:225 and 66:2).

7. Some examples may be cited of the false oaths which were used for deception.

   The Hypocrites, "in whose hearts is a disease", "swore their strongest oaths by Allah" that they would be with the Muslims, but treachery was in their hearts (5:55-56).

   See also 24:53.

   On the other hand, the oath of Joseph's wicked brethren, "By Allah", in speaking to their father, (12:85), seems to be a mere expletive, used lightly, and therefore worthy of condemnation.

8. In passages like the following, the oath seems to be emphatic and solemn as in a court of law:

12:66	By Joseph's brethren, at Jacob's request.
12:73	By Joseph's brethren, to the Egyptians
21;57	By Abraham, to the Polytheists.
26:97	By the denizens of Hell, when they realize their wrong.
37:56	By the righteous one in heaven, when he realizes the great danger he escaped in life.
38:82	By the Power of Evil, who solemnly swears by the power of Allah.
46:34	By the denizens of Hell, when ther realize the Truth.

9. In the following passages addressed by Allah to men, an appeal is made to man's realization of Allah's own greatness, goodness, and glory, or Allah's special relationship to man as Creator, Cherisher, and Protector, to teach him the lesson of truth and right conduct.

   In English phrase it might be rendered: "As I am thy Lord God, believe in Me and follow My Word."

4:65	"By thy Lord" (they can have no real faith until…).
15:92	"By thy Lord" (We will call them to account).
16:56	"By Allah" (ye shall be called to account).
16:63	"By Allah" (We sent messengers).
19:68	"By thy Lord" (We shall gather them together).
34:3	"By my Lord" (said by the Prophet to assure men of the coming of the Hour of Judgement,
64:7	"
51:23	"By the Lord of heaven and earth" (this is the very Truth). See also 70:40 (paragraph 12 below).

10. Another way in which an appeal is made to men is by the evidence of the life of the Holy Prophet, whose truth and purity were known to them, or by the Holy Quran, whose wonderful power over men's hearts was a miracle which they witnessed before their eyes.

15:72	"By thy life" (to enforce the lesson of the unspeakable crime of Lu's people).
36:2	"By the Quran. Full of wisdom" (to show the Prophet's inspiration).
38:1	"By the Quran, full of admonition" (to show the error of the Unbelievers).
43:2	"Bt the Book that Makes things clear" (to show that Revelation and conformable to truth).
44;2	"
50:1	"By the Glorious Quran" (to quell the wonder of the ignorant).

11. Now we come to the great mystic passages in the Makkan Surahs, in which men are adjured to turn to the wonders of the spiritual world by striking phrases full of sublimity, full of mystery, full of symbolism, and using the wonders of the heavens and the earth by way of illustration.

    They are the despair of the translator, because the words used are widely comprehensive, with little that is precise in them.

    There are layers upon layers of meaning, and only the profoundest spiritual experience can probe their depths. An attempt has been made in the notes to analyze and explain some of their meanings. All that we can do here is to bring them together into juxtaposition, to help the earnest student.

    They may be divided into three categories.

    - those introduced by the words "La uqsimu" (I do swear or I do call to witness).
    - those introduced by the particle wa, which is the general form of adjuration, and

- those, mainly concerned with the Judgement to come, which are introduced by the adverb "idha" (when).

12. La Uqsimu (with the first person singular) implies that special attention is drawn to something by a personal and beneficent God, and an appeal is made to His creature.

56:75	"The setting of the stars." Other glories may set, but not the glory of Revelation.
69:38	"What ye see and what ye see not." Revelation is good for both outer and inner life.
70:40	"The Lord of all points in the East and the West." Allah's Kindom extends everywhere.
75;1-2	"The Resurrection Day and the self-reproaching spirit." Evil should be eschewed.
81:15-18	"Planets, Night, and Dawn." Nature may vary, but Allah's Light is ever the same.
84:16-18	"The ruddy glow of sunset, the Night, the Moon." Man must travel from stage to stage.
90:1-3	"This City (of Makkah) and mystic ties." Man is created for toil and struggle, but Allah had given him guidance.

13. The great mystic Symbols or Signs, introduced by the particle wa, by which man is adjured to turn to the higher life, are rich in suggestive imagery, which loses part of its charm by any attempt at precise definition:

37:1	"By those who range themselves in ranks"
51:1-4	"By the (Winds) that scatter broadcast" etc.
51:7	"By the heaven with its numerous Paths" etc.
52:1-6	"By the Mount (of Revelation)" etc.
53:1	"By the Star when it goes down."
68:1	"By the Pen and by the Record which men write".
74:32-34	"By the Moon, the Night, the Dawn".
77;1-5	"By the (Winds) sent forth (to man's profit)" etc.
79:1-5	"By the (angels) who tear out" etc.
85:1-3	"By the Sky (displaying) the Zodiacal Signs" etc.
86:1	"By the Sky and the Night-Visitant (therein)".
86:11-12	"By the Firmament which returns (in its round), and by the Earth" etc.
89:1-5	"By the Break of Day", etc.
91;1-8	"By the Sun and its (glorious) splendour. By the Soul…" etc.
92:1-3	"By the Night as it conceals (light); By the Day as it appears in glory" etc.

93:1-2 "By the Glorious morning Light" etc.

95:1-3 "By the Fig and the Olive" etc.

100:1-5 "By the (Steeds) that run with panting breath" etc.

103;1 "By (the Token of) Time (through the Ages)".

14. The great mystic Symbols introduced by the adverb "when" (idha) do not in form belong to the category of Adjurations, but their mystic meaning and imagery bring them within this category.

    They refer to the end of the present order of things, and the inauguration of the new world of perfect spiritual values, but they need not necessarily be understood in a definite sequence of time such as we know it, for the spiritual world overlaps the material:

    77:8-11 "When the Stars become dim" etc.

    81;1-13 "When the Sun is folded up" etc.

    82;1-4 "When the Sky is cleft asunder" etc.

    84:1-3 "When the Sky is rent asunder" etc.

    99:1-3 "When the Earth is shaken" etc.

15. Every Symbol is connected with the argument of the passage concerned, by way of metaphor or illustration.

    See note 5798 to 74:32. the appropriate meaning suggested is explained in the notes to each passage as it occurs.

TAFSEER E- QURAN IN ENGLISH

Exegesis of Quran

Exegesis of Quran



[SELECTED VERSES]

[BY]

[FAISAL HAIDER]

Surah Al Baqarah (The Cow) 2

Verse 178

O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered - the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But if he is forgiven by his kin, then grant any reasonable demand, and pay with goodwill. This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment.

Tafseer:

All of the believers are addressed here, that it is part of your faith to follow this command it has been made obligatory on you, Qassas is to punish the criminal in the same way like he has committed the crime for example if he cuts your ear then you should also cut his ear or if he broke your bone then you also break his bone, Qassas is translated as equal retaliation, or equal retribution, or equal punishment. Qassas is the legal Islamic way of retribution by taking stand for the innocent against whom the crime has been committed so equal justice must be done. If an innocent person has been killed deliberately then his retribution must have taken in an exact same way because in our religion life is a very precious thing. As in our religion it is mentioned that if a person has killed another person and if the victim is innocent than the person has killed all of the mankind. So, the murder of one innocent person is like murder of the entire humanity. Because if a person kills one person and gets away with it than he will be able to kill another and another and so on as one murder leads to many more. Once a person develops disrespect for human life then he doesn't care for anyone else.

In our religion, many examples have been given for the preservation of human life. So human life is very precious. So, if an innocent person has been killed then the murderer has also to be killed for legal and just retribution. Since Qassas means equal and same retribution so if an innocent person arm has been injured by the criminal that his arm is no longer functional than the criminal arm has also to be amputated.

Qassas is with regard to three things

1. *Lives*
2. *Limbs*
3. *Wounds and harm caused deliberately.*

Detail about limbs and wounds are mentioned in ***Surah Al Maida*** *here in this verse it is only about lives that is murder which a murderer does deliberately.*

There are 3 options mentioned for Qassas

1. *Kill for Kill*
2. *Blood Money for Heirs*
3. *Forgiveness by the Heirs*

So, either you kill the criminal who has killed the innocent person or there has been prescribed another way that you take blood money in return, as if the murderer says he has committed the murder deliberately in anger or whatever insane state of mind and realizes his mistake so the kin (heirs) of the victim can instead take blood money for the person who committed the murder. The blood money can range from 5 camels to 100 camels and the condition for camels has to be that out of 100 camels 60 has to be pregnant female camels that is she will produce more camels soon. So, it is a lot of money not just some low amount of figure, so the second possibility is blood money.

The third possibility is that the heirs can forgave the murderer. So, the heirs say that we realize you have made a mistake and what would we do with all this money so we just forgive you (the murderer) and end

the case and we don't want any more troubles so just don't come in front of us. One of Prophet Muhammad uncle was killed by a man and when that man accepts Islam Prophet Muhammad forgave him of the murder of His uncle and say just don't come in front of me because you can realize how bad the Prophet would feel when that man will come again in front of Him.

So, the three possibilities of Qassas is

1. *To kill the Murderer. 2. To take blood money. 3. To forgive the Murderer (by kin).*

When in case the non-Muslims criticizes that how barbaric is Islam that when someone commits a murder he has to be killed, just imagine the worst scenario that the criminal has to be sentenced to jail. A human graveyard of living people known as the prison, A lot of time when someone after completing their life sentence from the prison and getting released commits suicide because they don't know how to continue their lives normally anymore in the society. And imagine if a murderer has been kept in a jail, then whose money has been used to look after him? It's the tax payer's money! So first the murderer commits an atrocious crime against you and second your money is being used to look after him. In our religion, it is mentioned to take the side of the innocent not the criminal so the unjust crime has to be stopped so if for a murder the punishment is just to serve a few years inside a prison then the crime would become very common in society. So, in places where there is capital punishment where the murderers are also killed then in those places the crime is reduced but in places where the criminals are only let go to serve few years in prison then the crime rate of murder is also very high. So, in places like where there is capital punishment in place crime rate is very low like in Saudi Arabia total number of crimes in one given year was 84,000 compared to 11 million in the same given year in United States of America.

Also in places where there is capital punishment in place when people saw that punishment given to criminals in public by executing the murderer it leaves a huge impact on them with fear of law. So, the capital punishment of the criminal is a huge lesson for the others because it tells if anyone of them do the same crime they will also be dealt in the same manner no matter who ever they are or whose relative they are. So other people will be extremely careful and will think twice, thrice or more before harming someone.

Qassas is equal retribution like if a free man has committed a crime then the free man will be held accountable not his wife or children. Also, if a slave has committed the murder than that slave would be held accountable and if a female has committed a murder than that female will be held accountable not someone else besides him. So, it's always the criminal who is held accountable not someone else besides him. Scholars also says if a group of people kills one person than all of them would be killed because all of them together commits that murder so all of them is held accountable and be killed.

When some Muslim lives in a place where this Islamic sharia is not in place then in that place the believers should rather follow law of the land and not to establish their own law. But one must know what Islam has taught about this law.

So, with this punishment if the criminal who faces the capital punishment in life then on the day of judgement he will go clean but if the criminal who doesn't face this capital punishment of Qassas for his crime than on the day of judgement he will go with this crime as a baggage and held responsible on that day. And if the person who faces the capital punishment of Qassas but his heart is not clean than ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the judge on day of judgment if he misbehaves after that. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says when you implement the law of Qassas and catch the criminal and punish him accordingly then you have life that is you are actually saving lives by killing the murderer so that he may not repeat the crime with others. So, if the crime is not stopped and if the criminal gets away with it then the crime will multiply in number because others will think that if one can get away with it so can they as well.

So, when you turn on the television you see too much killings even people kills other people in video games which leaves a negative impact on the mind of concerned person so there seems to be so much disrespect for human life. Abuse and backbiting is also not allowed in religion because when you abuse or back bite a person it can also leads you towards killing that person so back biting opens a door of hatred which leads towards an atrocious crime so even that door is closed and not allowed in religion.

Verse 179

And there is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, O you [people] of understanding, that you may become righteous.

Tafseer:

So, this punishment tells us an important lesson that one should not play with human lives as it is a very serious matter. So, in this verse ALLAH address the people of intellect not the ordinary peoples because ordinary people will not understand the harshness of this capital punishment but the people of intellect will.

So those people who have intellect, who uses their minds will see the benefits of Qassas, As Qassas truly saves lives and is better. So Qassas has been obligated on you, as it is means of saving lives and it protects you as when you side with the innocent you actually do a favor to yourselves because tomorrow the same will not happen with you or your family members. And, you may also develop the fear of Allah (Taqwa).

So next time when someone wants to commit a murder he would also have fear of ALLAH which will stop them from committing that crime. In Islam when capital punishment is placed then physical evidence as well as testimony of people are also taken. That is, they take oath on ALLAH that they have seen the person committing that crime. But in a rare case if an innocent man has been given capital punishment and later it is found out that the person is innocent than in that rare case the family of the man who has been punished will be given blood money by state.

Verse 196

And complete the Hajj and 'Umrah for ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. But if you are prevented, then [offer] what can be obtained with ease of sacrificial animals. And do not shave your heads until the sacrificial animal has reached its place of slaughter. And whoever among you is ill or has an ailment of the head [making shaving necessary must offer] a redemption of fasting [three days] or charity or sacrifice. And when you are secure, then whoever performs 'Umrah [during the Hajj months] followed by Hajj [offers] what can be obtained with ease of sacrificial animals. And whoever cannot find [or afford such an animal] - then a fast of three days during Hajj and of seven when you have returned [home]. Those are ten complete [days]. This is for those whose family is not in the area of al-Masjid al-Haram. And fear ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and know that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is severe in penalty.

Tafseer:

You should completely perform the Hajj and Umrah for the sake of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. Hajj and Umrah are the pilgrimages that a person performs by going to Kabbah (House of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH). Hajj is the greater or major pilgrimage and Umrah is the minor or lesser pilgrimage. Hajj is to intend to go to House of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH at a particular time to perform certain rituals. So, Hajj cannot be performed at any time of year but rather at a specific time of the year. At Hajj, you just don't go to Kabbah and perform but there are certain rituals that one has to perform at that specific time. Umrah (means to populate) is a visit or constant visits to the house of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH throughout the year by people, there is no place on this earth which is as busy as the House of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH all the year, every busy place shuts down for a while for whatever maintenance purpose but the House of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH never shuts down even for any maintenance work, as the people is constantly populating the place for Umrah.

So, when you go to perform the Hajj then one should complete it and also when you intend to perform Umrah then complete it also don't leave it partially completed. So, one should finish what they have started with a serious attitude and they should do it for the sake of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH when they have started it. Whoever is able to perform the journey must perform the Hajj completely for ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sake and do not leave it incomplete. But for some reason if you are restricted or restrained or prevented from to continue the journey or a person fells extremely ill or any major situation happens which restricts you to perform the pilgrimage then you can discontinue your Hajj or Umrah but you cannot come out of the state of Ihram immediately as you have to perform all other rituals which includes slaughter of an animal and shaving of head and so on. So, one who has to discontinue his pilgrimage can discontinue but they have to give certain redemption which would be sacrificing a sacrificial animal (goat, sheep, cattle & camels) that is easily available to them which should be arranged from outside of the Haram and taken inside the Haram. So, people should take the animal with them inside the Haram from outside and that animal has to be whatever sacrificial animal the person can afford and until the sacrificial animal has not reached its destination that is the place of its slaughter the person cannot shave its head and after that the person can get out of Ihram, so now he is not doing the pilgrimage any more officially. Sacrificial animal is going to be slaughtered or made halal inside the place in Haram. So ideally the sacrifice is to be made in Haram but if that is not possible than any place possible where the person is. As like Prophet Muhammad and Sahabas once did the slaughter at hudaybia when they were not allowed to enter Haram.

Another situation is when someone is extremely ill with any kind of ailment in his head with head injury of any kind and he has to shave his head before so in that case a person can violate the rule and shave his head but he has to give some Fidya (redemption / ransom) for violations of procedure. There are 3 options for Fidya.

1. He has to fast for 3 days or

2. Feed 6 needy people or

3. Slaughter an animal either a sheep or a goat.

The pilgrimage of Hajj can be carried out in three different ways called Tamattu, Qiran and Ifrad.

Hajj Tamattu

In normal circumstances when you can easily perform Hajj and Umrah and one can take advantage of performing both Umrah with the Hajj as well.

This is the most common form of pilgrimage and the one recommended by the Prophet Muhammad himself (peace and blessings of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH be upon him). Tamattu' involves the pilgrim performing the rites of the minor pilgrimage ritual known as Umrah, then performing the rites of the Hajj. Pilgrims performing Tamattu' are called Mutamatti. As this is the most common type of pilgrimage, especially for foreigners to Saudi Arabia.

Hajj Qiran

In this option, the pilgrim performs the rites of both the Umrah and Hajj in one continuous act with no "break" in the middle. Pilgrims performing Qiran are called Qaarin.

Hajj Ifraad

Finally, this form of pilgrimage involves performing only the rites of the Hajj - not of the Umrah as well. ***This form of pilgrimage is also notable for being the only one that does not require animal sacrifice****. Pilgrims performing Ifraad are called Mufrid.*

Here Hajj Tamattu' is talked about in this verse. The one who is performing Hajj Tamattu has also to offer a sacrificial animal because he is performing Hajj and Umrah together in his one trip as he is doing more rituals, than he has to be more grateful. But if a situation arrives that a person is doing Hajj Tamattu, he has performed his Umrah and Hajj but for whatever reason he doesn't have money left for the sacrifice of animal and no way he can arrange money from home before the end of Hajj for sacrifice so then whoever cannot afford sacrifice in this case has too fast for 3 days in the days or months of Hajj, he can do the fast before Hajj if he knows in advance that he may not be able to arrange for animal sacrifice or he can fast after the 3 days of Hajj which means you are not allowed to fast on the days of performing Hajj, and then they have to do seven more fast when they are going back home so it makes it total of 10 complete fast for those who cannot sacrifice in Hajj Tamattu. As Hajj Tamattu is for those who live outside of Makkah (haram) and every one should fear ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH because when a person does something wrong ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH gives severe punishment.

Verse 255

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

Tafseer:

There is no GOD except ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, WHO is to be worshipped. So, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the One Who is shown dedication to, The One Who is shown humility meaning a person is humble in front of HIM, one brings himself down, makes himself low in front of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and also all of this is done with love and with respect. So, The One Who is worshipped, The One Who is shown humility, out of love and respect. So, we worship ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and when we show devotion two things must drive us, first love of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and secondly respect of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. So, there is no other god, no object, no person or deity except ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH worthy of worship so HE is The One who should only be worshipped.

Who is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH? HE is the Ever- Living and HE is also the Sustainer of all. What kind of life ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH have? HIS Life is Eternal! So, HE is the Ever- Living, HE is the One Who has Eternal and perfect Life. HE was always there and HE will always be, HE is The First and The Last, HE is Eternal, HE has no beginning and HE has no end. HE is also The One who gives life! that is The Giver of Life, things are alive because ALLAH SUBAHN O TALLAH gives them life, and if HE takes the life away then they will be dead, So HE is the Giver of Life! HE is the One Who is Established perfectly without any support, HE is Independent, and HE doesn't rely on anyone or anything (Self-Subsisting). HE is also The One Who Establishes others and gives Provision to others. The One Who Supports other. The One Who Give Life to others. So, HE is the Sustainer of all existence.

It does not seize HIM, it does not take hold of HIM what does not seize HIM and what does not take hold of HIM? Drowsiness which means to yawn it also means sleepiness basically it is used for the initial stage of sleep when a person is not really sleeping but he's about to sleep, they feels sleepy and when you're sleepy what happens you become sluggish you become lethargic so it refers to the initial stage of sleep when a person is not really sleeping but before that when they becomes sleepy, they become drowsy, you can't sit, you can't stand, you can't do any work you just want to go and sleep, your eyes cannot stay open. So, sleepiness, sluggishness, lethargy, drowsiness, yawning it does not overtake ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, HE does not become sleepy, HE does not become tired, HE does not become drowsy and HE also does not sleep.

HE Owns whatever is in the seven skies (the heavens), and the earth all of it belongs to HIM. This notion basically gives us three meanings, first of all everything belongs to HIM, HE is the owner of all the things in heavens and earth. So, as possessions of all the things are HIS, whatever that is in the heavens and the earth they are possessions of Whom? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH! Secondly the creatures, Who Created them? Whatever that is within the heavens and the earth Who Created them? Who is their Creator? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. So, first of all as possessions, secondly as creatures and thirdly as servants all that is within the heavens and the earth they are all servants of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Then ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says: who can dare to go and intercede in front of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH except by the permission of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. HE knows what is in front of them, them refers to the creation. So, whatever that is in front of the creation ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH knows about it. What does it mean by what is in front of the creation? What the creation can see, what the creation knows about, what the creation can perceive so whatever is known to you, whatever you do, whatever is in your possession, whatever you can see, whatever you can perceive Who knows about it? Who has better knowledge about it? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH! and also, HE knows very well about what is behind them. What does it mean by that what is behind the creation? It means that which is unknown to them, that which is unseen to the creation, the creation does not know about it, the creation has not seen it and it may also apply to the future that is future of the creation! So, do you know what's going to happen tomorrow to you, a week from now, 20 years from now? Do you have any idea about

your future? No, you don't, but Who knows about it? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH knows about it. And the creation will not encompass that is they cannot know the knowledge that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has that is the complete knowledge that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has, the human beings or the creation even if it's the Jinn they cannot know of it anything except for that which ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH wills for them to know. As we can only know about that which ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH wants us to know! no matter how much we try we cannot figure out if ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH does not want us to know.

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH footstool (throne) extends over the heavens and the earth meaning it is huge it extends over the heavens and the earth and it does not tire HIM! What does not tire HIM? Preserving of them, guarding of them, whom that refers to? The heavens and the earth. يَـُٔوْدُهٗ *basically means when something becomes heavy and a person cannot bear it anymore, for example you're carrying something that is very heavy* يَـُٔوْدُهٗ *is when you're carrying something heavy in the first place, and it becomes even more heavy on you and because it's so heavy that you cannot carry it anymore, this is what the literal meaning of the word* يَـُٔوْدُهٗ *is when you cannot carry something because of its heavy weight and you become* ***tired.*** *You see if you're carrying a heavy bag from one end of the room to the other end of the room it's difficult but you'll probably manage isn't it so? Because it's only for a short while as you only have to take it from here to there but suppose you have to carry that heavy bag from your end all the way to upstairs. A long journey and difficult journey, so then carrying that bag becomes even more difficult this is what* يَـُٔوْدُهٗ *means a responsibility or a weight that one has on himself and he gets tired because of carrying it.*

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says over here this is the literal meaning now we look at the context: وَلَا يَـُٔوْدُهٗ ***and it does not tire*** *HIM! What does not tire HIM? Guarding of them. The responsibility of guarding, of preserving the heavens and the earth, of looking after the heavens and the earth. This huge responsibility, it does not tire HIM. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH does not get tired because of this great responsibility and finally who is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH? HE is The Most High, The Exalted and ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is also The Most Great, The Supreme, above everything else what does it mean it refers to the height of HIS power and the height of HIS position that HE has such power and HE has such a position that there is no one else above him.* الْعَلِيُّ *indicates what? The height of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH Power and HIS Position that there is no one else above HIM in rank or in power this is what* الْعَلِيُّ *means.*

And الْعَظِيْمُ *means to be Great it describes ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH immense power, HIS great Power, HIS great Importance so how is* الْعَلِيُّ *and* الْعَظِيْمُ *different? In* الْعَلِيُّ *what's the focus the height no one else above HIM and in* الْعَظِيْمُ *what's the focus the immensity, the greatness of HIS Power that HE has great Power, HE has great Authority, HE has great Nobility, HE has a great Status. So, HE is Exalted and HE is also Great and* الْعَظِيْمُ *also gives the meaning of that The One Who has greatness in HIS Dominion that is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has the greatest dominion and also in HIS attributes, HE is also Greatest that there's no one else who has greatest or better attributes than ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.*

Verse 285 - 286

The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his GOD, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and HIS angels and HIS books and HIS messengers, [saying], "We make no distinction between any of HIS messengers." And they say, "We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our GOD, and to YOU is the [final] destination." ***(285)***

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our GOD, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our GOD, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our GOD, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. YOU are our Protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people." ***(286)***

Tafseer:

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and not just the messenger but also the believers meaning, The Messenger has believed and the believers have also believed. What have they all believed in? It is in whatever that was revealed from their GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH).

What is Iman (faith) remind yourself of the definition, recall the definition of Iman (faith) what is faith don't tell what faith includes but what's the literal technical definition of a faith? It is to affirm the truthfulness of something and then to accept it and not just accept but also to submit. So, the messenger has accepted, he believes in, he confirms the truthfulness of and he submits to whatever ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has revealed to him and what is it that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has revealed to him (the messenger)? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH tells us in ***Surat AN Nisa verse 113*** *that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has revealed upon you the book and the wisdom! What is the book? What's in front of you the Quran! and what is the wisdom that was revealed in the messenger Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). It is in the form of the Sunnah! So, both the revelation that is recited and the revelation that's not recited* ***The Quran and The Sunnah*** *every command, every instruction, every information, every fact that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH revealed upon HIS messenger. The messenger believes in it, He accepts it to be true and he also submits to it, meaning he does what is required.*

So, the messenger's faith is that he accepts and he conveys and he does which is why we see that the Prophet of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, Muhammad (P.B.U.H) didn't just believe, didn't just have faith that I believe in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH! No, he also accepted! he also did what was required, he conveyed the message no matter how hard it was, even if it meant leaving your hometown, even if it meant suffering great persecution, many battles, hunger, famine whatever suffering he experienced he did! Why? Because he believed that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH had revealed to him and he submitted! and this is the reason why he conveyed even if people called him insane and madman, a magician and the list goes on. Whatever he was called still he conveyed! Why? because he believed and he didn't just convey but he also did! he also worshiped ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH he didn't just tell people to pray he prayed himself in the night that his feet would swallow he didn't just tell people give charity, no he gave it himself as well he didn't just tell people go fight in the cause of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, no he went himself as well he didn't just say speak the truth, no he spoke the truth himself as well. The messenger believed, he did he conveyed, he submitted, he surrendered to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH but is it only the messenger? No ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says the believers also follow footsteps of the messenger, they have also believed so the believers faith is that they believe they accept, they acknowledged & affirm the truthfulness of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, the messenger and whatever that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH revealed and they don't just simply say yes to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, the Quran, they don't just say it is only right, but they also do what is required on their part. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says: all of them, they all believe in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, meaning the messengers as well as the believers they all believe in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and HIS angels. Belief in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH means believing in HIS existence in HIS Lordship in the fact that HE is the only ONE WHO deserves worship in HIS names and attributes. They believe in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, HIS angels that HE is the Creator of the angels The ONE WHO assigned them certain tasks they also believe in the Angels that the Angels brought the messages of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH to the Prophets and not just

the Angels but all of the books that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH revealed. They were revealed as guidance and HIS messengers they believed in all of HIS messengers.

Notice it's not one messenger but all of them because we have to believe in every single messenger. Rejecting one messenger is like rejecting all of them because if you reject a messenger? you're saying that I don't believe that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sent him, I don't believe that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sent that message for the benefit of people, for the guidance of people so you are in reality rejecting who? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and HIS favor and HIS guidance and when a person is rejecting one then he's rejecting all! his faith will not be accepted, this is why we have to believe in all of the messengers.

So, we believe in our hearts we say with our tongues that Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) was true! Prophet Essa (Jesus) was true! Prophet Mousa (P.B.U.H) was true! Prophet Noah (P.B.U.H) was true all of the messengers whether we know them or we don't know them? We believe in them! We believe in the fact that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sent messages to them and that they did their job they conveyed the message to the people. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says in Surat Hadid verse 25, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH said that: Certainly, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sent the messengers with clear evidences and ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sent to them the book to the messengers, what was given the book so all of the 4 major Holy and Sacred books that are Tawrat (Torah), Zabur (Psalms), Injil (Gospel), & Quran Majeed whether it's preserved in its original form or altered or forgotten by people completely still we believe in it but obviously when it comes to following which messenger do we follow then we follow Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) because the teachings of previous messengers they are lost but there are examples that are mentioned in the Quran, yes we do follow them because ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH tells us to follow the example of the previous prophets if a person is questioning the Injil, (the gospel) and he's trying to refute it constantly then it is that disrespect to the messenger. But if it is done in an appropriate way with respect as ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says: Argue in the best manner and it is done for a purpose that you're trying to convince someone that look this cannot be the truth anymore because it is altered it has been changed by people the original message was lost. So, as long as a person does it in a respectful way it is okay! because the person is doing it to convince someone there should be a reason behind it and sometimes we get so lost in refuting others and we don't know what we have to do. People know the Gospel (Injil) more than they know the Quran unfortunately!

So, believing in the books means that we believe that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has revealed them and especially the book that was the last message that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has promised that HE will preserve it. And by believing it means that a person knows what it says and he also acts on it so the believers they say that we do not differentiate between any of the messengers. So, we don't differentiate and we don't discriminate between any of the messengers. What does it mean? That we believe in every single one of them we don't do what the people of the past did that we're not going to believe in this messenger because there are many who say that yes Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is a messenger but for the Arabs not for us this is what discriminating between the messengers. It doesn't befit a believer in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH that he says oh! this prophet not for us, and this prophet not for us! No all of the messengers we believe in them. Yes, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has given them different ranks we learned earlier that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has preferred some over the others but it doesn't mean that we go on to disbelieve in some and believing in some. No! We believe in all of them and the believers said that we've have heard and we have obeyed! That is, we have heard the commands, we have heard the prohibitions, we have heard the instructions, and we will obey meaning we will listen we won't say that no I'm not going to do it. No! we will obey, we will comply and this should be the attitude of a believer because in this verse who is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH describing who is HE praising the true believers those who are true in their faith who don't just say they're believers but they actually believe in their act as they show it, so a believer does not say I know but I cannot do? No way! A believer says O ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH! I know I have found out and I will try my best! you help me, forgive me for the past and help me in the future.

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, we beg your forgiveness because when a person realizes the burden of sin that he is carrying that he feels heavily weighed down and when a person is heavily weighed down then you know what! he cannot talk much, much doesn't come out of his mouth he cannot even find the words with which he can seek ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH forgiveness all that he can say is I'm sorry, I'm sorry when you're really guilty when you feel bad about what you've done then what happens you don't even

know what to say. Oh, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH we beg your pardon! Oh, our GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) we need your forgiveness only you can forgive us and to you is our return! to you is the destination meaning in the world and the eternal life.

Any affair, any matter, any problem, any challenge, any difficulty, WHO do we turn to? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH! because WHO can forgive ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH WHO can create ease ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH WHO can facilitate only ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. We return to YOU! So, what do we learn in this verse? We see that the believers are the followers of the messenger. The believers are to follow the messenger, and believed Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) as ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH prophet! So, we too will believe, and those acts that the Prophet did we will follow it as well. Once Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) was praying Salah He was leading the people in prayer he was wearing his shoes and in the middle of the prayer he took his shoes off and put them on the side and the Sahaba even they were wearing their shoes in the Salah, so they also took their shoes off and put them on the side after the prayer the Prophet asked them that why did you remove your shoes they said we saw you so we did it too he said I took my shoes off because my shoes had some impurity on them Gibreel (Gabriel) told me this is why I removed my shoes but your shoes are not impure so when you come to the Masjid just check your shoes if they're clean then pray in them if they're impure then clean them and then pray.

So, what do we learn that the believers are to follow the messenger whatever He does we do it too. He ate with the right hand we eat with the right hand, He said Bismillah we say Bismillah, He said ALLAH O Akbar upon going up! we do that too, because here look at how it is mentioned that the believers are to follow the messenger and the fact is that the stronger the faith of a person the more he will follow the messenger because it has to do with Iman (faith).So what the messenger believed, the believers believed that, the stronger their belief will be the more they will follow him .The attributes of the believers is that they hear and obey, a believer hears and submits, he finds out and he does it. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says in Surat Noor verse 51 that the only statement of the believers when they're called to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and HIS messenger for judgment is that they say we have heard and we will obey now when it comes to this matter people are of three types.

When it comes to hearing and obeying people are of three types, one type of person is he who doesn't hear and doesn't obey! he doesn't listen, doesn't find out, doesn't learn and obviously he doesn't obey and this is the case of the majority of the people. They say don't study otherwise you'll have to do it, don't learn otherwise you have to follow so stay ignorant as for them ignorance is bliss! This is what many people say this is what they believe in. Another attitude is of those who hear, who listen, who find out but they don't obey! There is will but there is no power why is it that a person hears but then he does not obey what's the reason? Arrogance, pride? It is arrogance that prevents a person from submitting from obeying that a person says no I'm not going to change myself now why should I do this? why should I do that? who cares I'm the boss it's my life it's up to me my choice this is pride. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says in ***Surah Luqman verse 7*** *when ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH verses are recited to him, he turns away arrogantly as if he didn't even hear because if he had heard properly he would have followed but when he didn't follow after hearing what is preventing him from following right now ask yourself that when we know about something yet we don't do it what is preventing us our ego! No, why should I? Why do I have to do it? I'm not going to. It's pride that prevents us from following the commands of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH then the third type of attitude is of those who hear and obey. Those who hear and obey and only this is the way to success. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says in* ***Surah Ahzab Verse 71*** *whoever obeys ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and HIS messenger that in fact he has achieved the great achievement meaning he is the one who is truly successful then we also learned in this verse that since the commands that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has revealed sometimes they are difficult for us to follow and everyone's capacity is different it is true for one person to wear hijab not a big deal but for another it's like climbing up a mountain every day right? For one person to apologize not a big deal but for another it's as though he is you know throwing himself in the river, right? So, everyone's capacity is different but then what is required from us that we hear and we disobey? No! we hear and we try to obey we keep trying and for our shortcomings what do we do? Say Oh ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH you forgive us because every single person he needs the forgiveness of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. Remember even if we think we are doing everything that we're supposed to even if we think we are doing everything right still we make mistakes. Isn't it when you prepare for an exam when you prepare for a test before you walk in the into the examination hall you know that you are prepared or that's at least what you think but yet! do you make mistakes yet you do! you still end up making mistakes so this is the reality we think we are doing*

things right we think we are doing everything but in reality we are making mistakes so what does that mean that, All the time we need to seek forgiveness because over here who is begging for forgiveness the messenger of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and if he is seeking forgiveness then what about you and I?

Remember every day we make mistakes like we discussed earlier you might think you are right but ask others they know about the mistakes that you're making because we don't look at ourselves but other people see us! So, beg forgiveness for the mistakes that we know we are committing and the mistakes that we don't even know we are committing. We don't even realize or we think it's not a big deal but it is in reality a big deal, so keep seeking forgiveness. When can a person do that? When he knows that he is a human being and that he's going back to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH he asks himself? I am going back to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH I cannot avoid ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and always remember that when a person makes a mistake he falls down, now he has two choices either he could stay there or he can get up and seek forgiveness every day as we go through our 24 hours we fall in a pit every now and then now it's up to us either we stay there or we try to get up and if you try to get up then you know what you're going to go higher than where you were before if you seek forgiveness you improve yourself you'll be at a better location, at a better level, at a better rank then you were at before you made the mistake. About Adam (P.B.U.H) ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says when Adam (P.B.U.H) disobeyed ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH then he made an erred but then ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH chose Adam (P.B.U.H). ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH chose him meaning his rank was even higher afterwards but you have to seek forgiveness and ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH assures us that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH does not overburden a soul more than what it can bear so whatever ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has imposed on us it is within our capacity to do it we can do it, it's not beyond our scope. Now these two versus in other words the last two verses of Surat Al-Baqarah they are special verses very special how special are they we learned that there are from a special treasure (metaphorically) from beneath the throne of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. From a special treasure from beneath the throne of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH now don't think about beneath the throne of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH as treasures from that the verses, As the verses are recited how can they have physical form? Don't think about that because even if you think about it you're not going to get anywhere what we need to learn here is that these verses are special! especially from ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH because they are from his treasure (metaphorically), the treasure beneath HIS throne. Then we also learned from a Hadith that these verses when they were revealed when they were given to the messenger Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) a special door, a special gate of the heavens was opened which was never opened before. Never opened before! You know like someone special has to come then you bring them in from a special entrance, right? Then we also learn from Hadees that these verses are such that they were only given to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) and not to any messenger before you know there are many teachings that were given to us but they were also given to the previous nations.

Isn't it so? Many teachings! but these two are so special that they were only given to Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) yes on Him and when you will look at the meaning you will realize that yes this was a special mercy upon this Ummah alone it's a special gift upon this final Ummah. Then we also learn that whoever recites ***these two verses in the night then these verses suffice him*** *they are sufficient for him, what does it mean by this that they are sufficient for him? Scholars have given two meanings one is that they are sufficient for his protection nothing can harm him in that night no jinn, no devil nothing Insha'Allah. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH special protection is with that person and other scholars have said that what it means by this is, these verses being sufficient for him is that they will suffice him from the night prayer meaning if a person is not able to get up for the night prayer stay up the whole night long in Salah begging ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH for forgiveness these two verses are enough to bring the same reward the same forgiveness as if we are able to pray all night long! Tell me are we able to? We make the intention at night that tonight I'm going to wake up and pray! right? I'm going to wake up 20 minutes earlier, 40 minutes earlier but then what happens the next thing you know it's Fajar time but if a person recites these verses in the night it's as though he has done night prayers only because what does a person do in night prayer? He is trying to earn good deeds and he's begging ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH forgiveness that's the main point but when a person reads these verses then he is begging ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH forgiveness as well and in the Hadees that I mentioned to you earlier we learned that when a person says these supplications then ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says that I shall accept your supplication! So, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says: ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH does not burden a person except with what is within its capacity and that is to impose something on someone which is*

challenging okay to impose something on someone which is challenging meaning it's not a piece of cake for them it is challenging and it requires some hard work on their part but ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says take comfort ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says HE does not burden us except with what is within its capacity except with what is within a person's scope. So, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says that HE does not burden people more than what they can bear! and this, the hard work is within our reach. So, the commands of the religion the obligations that are placed upon us because of the religion and the other matters of our lives that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH decides for us, so for example the command that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has given us in our religion that we have to pray 5 times a day! Can we pray 5 times a day? is it humanly possible? Yes, it is! It is not 50 prayers how many is it 5! Performing Hajj once in a lifetime is it possible? Yes! Fasting in the month of Ramadan possible? Yes! Not fasting all year round if it was fasting all year round then it wouldn't be within our capacity but one month it is within our capacity, doing ablution before we pray is it within our capacity yes if it wasn't we have to shower that would not be within our capacity when it comes to the decree yes meaning if ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH makes a person sick are they able to handle that sickness they are able to! This is why ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH make them sick. If a person loses a job are they able to live without that job yes, they are able to! This is why ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH made them suffer in that way if a person has some you know health concern, some social problems with you know family members or with friends or with co-workers anything is it that a person is not able to handle it? No, he can handle it remember any challenge that we face in life, any test that we go through in life whether it is our children acting up or it is our body getting tired or it is too much work to do or it is too many expectations of us remember if ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH gave it to you then you can do it if ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH puts you in that position, in that situation, in that problem then you can come out of it successful. No, it's not that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is making you fail no ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has put you in a situation that you can handle you can come out of it with flying colors but it's up to you, it's up to you that you can succeed or you can feel you may have to change yourself, you may have to try harder but remember it is within your capacity but what do we say I can't do it! I can't do it! too difficult! too hard! no way that's what we say and when we say it no way then yes it becomes no way! tell yourself I can! I will! I can do it! I have to do it! I have no choice I have to do it! So, when a person is in a situation then either he can do good or he can do bad like for example somebody's picking up fights with you all the time and you say why is this person in my life because you can handle them you can handle that conflict okay this is why ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH put you in that situation this is why ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH made certain people a part of your life now it's up to you either you can do good or you can do bad if you do good then ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says: for it is what it earned, what a person earns and in its favor it refers to good meaning if a person does good then it's for his benefit he will get the reward for it and if a person chooses to do otherwise than ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says: on it is what it acquires meaning a person will suffer the consequences of the sin that he commits, of the evil that he does but the choice is with you, you choose to do good or you choose to do evil! You do good you get reward you do evil you suffer punishment I want you to notice something kasabath كَسَبَت and Aikkasabath اِكْتَسَبَتْ/ why is there a difference in the form of the word there are different reasons that the scholars have given one is that kasabath كَسَبَت if you look at the word it's easy to pronounce. Aikkasabath اِكْتَسَبَتْ/ that is difficult to pronounce more letters kasabath كَسَبَت is what a person can acquire easily and Aikkasabath اِكْتَسَبَتْ/ is what a person does with intention with you know he decides to do it. He intentionally does it, he deliberates, he sometimes has to make extra effort to do it and this is a reality! Opportunity to do good sometimes, it comes very easy and when we choose to do bad it becomes more difficult it requires more effort on our part you know how? Let me give you an example somebody does bad to you if you forgive them what do you have to tell yourself it's okay let them go ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH knows Insha'Allah, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will forgive me you know what there must be a reason finished done you did good one step done but you decide to do evil which is that you want to take revenge so then you think and you plan, this is what they did I'm going to say this and I'm going to do that and I'm going to talk to this person and next week I'm going to do that and next year when they come and after two years when I see them, it never ends doesn't it? It never ends it becomes more and more difficult for you so every time you make that decision to continue that wrong then whose fault, is it? Your fault because you are making that choice you are making that decision so remember the choice is yours the decision lies in your hands this is why ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH teaches us to say that: Oh! our GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) don't hold us accountable, that is to catch someone, to hold them and responsible for something, to recompense them for what they have done. Oh! our GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) don't hold us accountable if we forget or we erred. When there's something you know but it escapes your mind, something you cannot recall it, you cannot remember it. So, for example you told yourself I'm going to be

good to them but the moment they come in front of you. You forgot that firm resolve you made you forgot about those feelings of forgiveness and that intention to be nice you forgot everything, that anger that frustration just came and those you know those flashbacks those memories of what happened in the past keeps coming and you forget or you learn that when you pray you're not supposed to move much but then when you're praying you forget you look here and you look there and you move too much you forgot and then halfway through you say how could I forget that! You were eating you forgot to say Bismillah halfway through Astagfaru-ALLAH I forgot to say Bismillah. We're human beings we forget and then we oppose meaning to disobey without the intention to disobey. You oppose, you contradict the rules without the intention to oppose the rules meaning you didn't do it deliberately it just happened you forgot you did not know you didn't remember there could be different reasons.

So, O! ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH don't call us to account if we forget or we make a mistake and if we erred because sometimes we don't know we don't remember Oh! our GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH)! So, don't make us carry the burden like the people before us were made to. It is the burden that prevents a person from going forward meaning it's so heavy that it doesn't let you move on! It slows you down or it stops you completely, So O! ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH don't impose something on us that will slow us down, that will demotivate us that will make things so difficult for us that we cannot continue and the people of the past yes, they were made to carry such heavy burdens such difficult burdens what does this burden refer to? It refers to both the hard work meaning the commands, the obligations and secondly it includes punishments as well! The difficulties that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH creates for a person because of his disobedience so don't make the commands so difficult that we cannot carry them on for a long time don't make our work so difficult that we cannot continue for a long time nor ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH punish us so that because of that punishment we are unable to continue. You know for example the learning that we're doing so far Alhamdulillah with the mercy of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH many of us have been able to continue but with many people what happens because of the difficulties at home or because of personal challenges or whatever they're unable to continue it's an issue and there are things that cannot be avoided, it's an issue a person starts doing something good but he finds it too difficult he cannot continue we see that the commands that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has given to us are such that we can do them so we should ask ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH for protection, for well-being in every matter in everything that we're doing that because of our sins ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH does not make things more difficult for us that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH teaches us to say Oh! ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH please don't make us carry what we don't have the strength to bear, don't make us carry what we don't have the strength to bear meaning don't impose on us something that we cannot handle, that we cannot do whose commitment we cannot fulfill this could be in religious matters and also in our personal lives in all matters make the religion such that we cannot follow it. Please don't make our life so difficult that we cannot carry the responsibilities that have been laid upon us, you know it happens that one person has nothing to do and another has so many things to do they cannot handle it. So, Who decree ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH decree, so ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH whatever you decree for me make it such that I can handle it I can bear it I can come out successful, don't put me in situations where I will fail rather give me problems that I can manage and pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us, so forgive our shortcomings, wherever we have fallen short the lessons we were supposed to memorize but we did not do them, the classes we were supposed to attend but we did not attend, the things we were supposed to but we did not do them fully we fell short and do we fall short yes we do other people they deserve certain rights from us but we are unable to fulfill them O! ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH please forgive us pardon our shortcomings, we have fallen short and we have in reality! and forgive us meaning forgive our faults the mistakes that we make forgive them for us and have mercy on us so that because of that mercy we don't fall into that same pit again we don't make that mistake again we don't repeat that mistake again rather we learn from our mistakes and we only go higher and higher that life does not just become like falling into square roots and trying to jump back up no that we become steady and if we do fall then we go higher. Have mercy on us protect us from falling into sin YOU are our Patron, our Guardian. As ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the one who protects WHO doesn't just offer protection and help but HE also protects from everything, we are nothing without YOU and this is true no person can do anything good without the help of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, no person can forgive without a facilitation of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, no person can respect without the facilitation from ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, no person can do anything good, cannot avoid anything bad unless and until ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH facilitates that for him so we acknowledge this although we are weak YOU are our GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH).

So, YOU help us! YOU help us carefully against the disbelieving people meaning against any challenge, against any difficulty that we face, any hurdle that comes our way, any opposition that we face YOU help us, YOU make us victorious, any mountain we have to climb YOU help us YOU give us the ability to climb that because the reality is that we are weak and only ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH can help us.

Surah Ali' Imran (Family of Imran) 3

Verse (135)

And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH? and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know.

Tafseer

When we do our selves, wrong or commit an act of indecency such as like Polytheism, Adultery, Homoeroticism, backbiting etc. which are considered immoral and indecent act by the society and also by the religion, so we have done injustice to ourselves by putting ourselves available to hell fire. So, by doing that which ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has forbidden, we have done injustice to ourselves by mistreating ourselves and others and after we have done this major sin if we soon remember ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and seek forgiveness for our sins whether any one knows or not but we know that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH knows so we seek forgiveness from ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and try not to repeat our sins. So, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says and who can forgive all sins except ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and if we do not persist or remain on what wrong we have done while we know, meaning once the person knows what wrong or sins one has committed and they intentionally do not remain constant on that sin rather they leave it. So, for such people there is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH forgiveness.

It is possible for humans to repeat their sins even after asking for forgiveness so they should then again ask for ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH forgiveness from the deepest end of their hearts and every time they realize and ask for forgiveness ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will forgave them. So, one should keep striving to get oneself out from that misbehavior or sin that they make and ask for forgiveness every time they repeat it, this gives a lesson that even a most righteous person is not completely free of sins but when they commit a sin the best of them always seek ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH forgiveness. As ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH loves repentance and to forgive people of their sins.

Verse (136)

Those - their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow [in Paradise], wherein they will abide eternally; and excellent is the reward of the [righteous] workers.

Tafseer

Such people who have these qualities of Taqwa (Piety) who have these traits are very much exalted in their status in the eyes of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. So those people who are high in Taqwa (piety) and are not like ordinary people, their reward is forgiveness and this reward is going to save them from the punishment of the hell fire, So it shows forgiveness is only from ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH also their other reward is the Heavens, So one reward is forgiveness which will save them from the hell fire and their other reward is the heavens through which they will attain success and in these heavens (gardens) underneath of which rivers would be flowing and they will be abiding there in eternally, So for those who works and constantly strive for obedience to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH for them is the excellent reward of this, one which is forgiveness and the second is the heavens (gardens) beneath which rivers would be flowing and they will be living in there eternally.

Verse (159)

So, by mercy from GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) you (prophet Muhammad) were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have dispersed from around you. So, pardon them and ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the conduct of affairs. And when you have decided, then put your trust in GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH), Indeed GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) loves the trusting.

Tafseer

Prophet Muhammad was the greatest person, here GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is telling about GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) favor for his messenger that the politeness and leniency Prophet Muhammad has in Him was a special favor by GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) which was necessary for the preaching of religion. If Prophet Muhammad doesn't have this attribute and otherwise be rude [in speech] and harsh in heart then people would instead be getting close to Him would rather get far away from Prophet Muhammad, so therefore he should take the way of pardon and forgiveness.

Also, the Prophet was advised to consult others in matter of affairs for the sake and benefit of Muslims. This verse also emphasizes about the importance and benefits of consultation and tells about its necessity and legitimacy.

Order of this consultation is in light of some scholar's obligatory and in light of some is meritorious.

Imam shawkani writes "For Rulers it is necessary to consult scholars on matters about which they have no knowledge or have difficulty. Consult, head of army about military matters, leading statesmen about public affairs, and subordinate authorities about their respective territory necessity and preferences.

Ibn Atiyah says that the Rulers obligatory affairs have no disputes who do not consult a scholar or religious scholar. This advice is only limited to those matters about which Shariat is silent or those which are concerned with administrative matters.

After Consultation matters on which Prophet has a firm opinion then He should trust and rely on GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and make a decision. This tells that even after consultation the final decision would be of the Ruler not the opinion makers or their majority like there it is in the democracy. And second all the confidence is on relying on GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) not on the minds of opinion makers. Next verse has also emphasized on relying on GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH).

Surah An-Nisa (The Women) 4

Verse 1

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.

Tafseer

Surah An-Nisa is a Madni surah and that means that it was revealed after the migration to Medina. By Madni Surah does not mean it was revealed in the city of Medina but what does it mean that it was revealed after the prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina so it could have been revealed in the city it could have been revealed outside the city so it's about the era the time not the place and Madni surah as you know they have long verses just like Surat UL Baqarah and Surah AAL-E-Imran some verses are so long that they covered an entire page there's only one verse of the Quran that covers an entire page other verses cover an entire line or two lines or three or four or five sometimes even seven so verses are long in general and what's the content what's the message that is contained in these verses we learn about various manners, etiquettes and acts of worships. Why is it so because in these surahs who is being addressed mainly the believers because when the prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina then who are the people around him who were the people around him mostly the Muslims in Makkah, there were also polytheists and in Medina there were mainly Muslims they were being trained so this is the reason why we learned about various commands, various etiquette, various rulings and this is the reason why in this surah also we will learn about many instructions pertaining to family life pertaining to laws of inheritance. So, these are the kind of instructions that we will learn in this surah and this surah is also called ***the Surah of Justice and Mercy*** *why do you think so? because when ALLAH revealed the laws pertaining to social matters the society then obviously with the laws of ALLAH what was established justice that those people who were deprived in society were finally being granted their rights women who had no share of property of inheritance were finally being given their rights an orphan whose father passed away even if the father left a great estate for him still the orphan would get nothing of his father's property so ALLAH revealed the Surah granting the rights to who? To the weak! granting the rights to who? to the oppressed, to those who are not heard so this is the reason why the surah is known as* ***Surah of Justice and Mercy*** *because in here the rights of the weak are mentioned and why do you think it's called Surat An Nisa? Who are An Nisa?* ***The Women*** *and we see that in many societies whether it's a society that's not modern or a society that is modern or even postmodern we see that women are oppressed they are deceived, they are betrayed they are cheated, they are used they are misused sometimes in the name of freedom sometimes by oppression there are various ways through which women are oppressed in different societies and who is the creator of women ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH who loves them and this is the reason why he grants them their rights as well and what are the rights of women Insha'ALLAH we will learn about many of them in this surah so this is the reason why it's called and An Nisa and we also see that a family it revolves around who? A woman! a mother, a wife this is what a family is about, a family is not possible unless the mother is there even if there is a father with his kids what's missing? The mother is missing, right?*

The father if he's not around still the kids can survive; little children can survive because the mother is there to fulfill their need! Someone else will fulfill their financial needs, their physical needs but the emotional needs that the mother fulfills, that a woman can fulfilled no one else can! So, the family revolves around the woman and this surah also teaches many lessons pertaining to social reform and that is not possible until who is reformed? The woman is reformed! so this is the reason why it's called An Nisa as well and we see that in this surah relationships are mentioned relationships that exist between people through blood through marriage, and related matters concerning inheritance all of them are mentioned also in the surah we will learn about the ***Hypocrites*** *&* ***Hypocrisy*** *such matters are also discussed so let's begin the surah.*

O People! O Mankind! earlier we have over here ALLAH addresses all people every single individual every single human being whether male or female, child or adult, educated or not, no matter what background, no matter what culture, what ethnicity, what status it doesn't matter even religion doesn't matter whether a person is a believer or a non-believer ALLAH addresses everyone over here!

All mankind or All people fear your GOD whether you believe in HIM or not HE is still your GOD whether you worship HIM or not HE is still your Creator HE still owns you whether you have a strong connection with HIM or not HE is still your God so you should acknowledge HIM and fear HIM because HE is there you can never run away, you can never avoid, you can never get away from HIM then what's the way to HIM? you are nothing without HIM so fear HIM why fear ALLAH why fear your GOD because unless and until people fear ALLAH they cannot reformed themselves, they cannot give the rights of others, they cannot establish justice in society, justice is impossible fairness is impossible unless and until there is fear of accountability there is fear of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH so this is the reason why ALLAH says fear your GOD worship HIM alone, abide by HIS commands, fear HIS punishment lest you disobey HIM.

Why should you not fear HIM? HE is the ONE WHO created you HE is the ONE WHO made you! and from what? from a single soul, from a single person, who is that single soul? Adam (PBUH)! ALLAH created the first man Adam (PBUH) and you. OH! people regardless of which age or which place you belong to you are the children of who Adam (PBUH). All human beings have descended from one father Adam (PBUH) and HE created from that single soul, its spouse! refers to a feminine.

What are those? one of the pair of living beings so it refers to the spouse so for a man it would be a woman and for a woman it would be a man. HE created from its bear made its spouse and then from them HE dispersed, HE scattered throughout the earth many men and many women and that is only possible when that couple can reproduce and when can a couple reproduce when one is male and the other is a female! if both are male they cannot have children if both are female they cannot have children so ALLAH created a man! and from that man, he created a woman and from them ALLAH created the rest of the humanity now the question is how did ALLAH make Hawwah (Eve) from Adam (PBUH) how is that possible ? It is possible because we learn in the Hadees the Prophet Muhammad said that Hawwah (Eve) was created from the Rib of Adam (PBUH) and in explanation of that he said that woman was created from a rib so Hawwah (Eve) was created from what from the rib of Adam (PBUH) and this is something that's not difficult to understand because every cell every part of the body what does that have its ***DNA! It has cells and cells can reproduce correct?*** *Which is why for example stem cells they're used for doing so many things that are beneficial for people for treatment, for growths like for various treatments so if ALLAH can create Adam (PBUH) from mud then he can create Hawwah (Eve) from some matter that was taken from Adams (PBUH) body! now the question is that why did ALLAH create Hawwah (Eve) from matter that was taken from Adams body why not create Hawwah (Eve) from mud just like Adam (PBUH) was created from mud you know why? because there would be a constant competition between the male and the female, a competition that the mud from which man was made is better or the mud from which the woman was made is better no the fact is that all of you are from the same origin like we learned earlier you are of one another we are of the same species we are one we are one people so ALLAH created from Adam (PBUH) Rib, its spouse its mate and the Prophet Muhammad said in the Hadith, he said that woman was created from a rib verily the most curved portion of the rib is its upper part meaning the rib is curved it's not a straight bone but rather it is curved so if you should try to straighten it then what will happen you will break it and if you leave it as it is then it will remain as is! what does this mean that don't try to change the form of the rib okay let it be a rib if you try to straighten it you're going to break it you're going to destroy it likewise a woman is a woman don't try to make her into a man okay she has her own nature she is different so accept her as she is and every individual should be treated in this way ! accept them the way they are! don't try to forcefully bend them! Or forcefully change them because if you force them you're going to destroy them like if there is a child and they are writing with their right hand and you're forcing them no I want you to be able to write with the left hand because I like people who write with the left hand so you forced a child to write with the left hand is he going to be able to write comfortably no! it's going to affect him so don't force something on someone that they cannot take that they're not made for so likewise a woman is a woman a man is a man accept a woman as she is and accept the man as he is and realized that both men and women are from the same origin so there should be no competition they're supposed to complement one another not compete with each other.*

So, he dispersed from Adam (PBUH) and Hawwah (EVE) many man and many women so if you think about it you go to any place on the earth whether it is the most snow and cold mountains or it is the hottest place in a desert or it's the thickest rainforests or it's a place where you know more than half the year you have winters and you have minus 40 degrees, minus 60 degrees almost sometimes but yet who will you find their people isn't that so you find people everywhere? You don't find birds everywhere or the

same kind of birds everywhere no you don't find elephants everywhere you don't find rats everywhere you don't find different creatures all over the year there are certain places that they belong because they can only survive in certain climates certain areas but we see that human beings no matter where you go you will find people and it's amazing that the earth is so huge and it's covered by people how many people are there in the world today 7 billion people imagine 7 billion people currently live on this world imagine how many people have lived before all of them came from who?

Haven't they all came from Adam (PBUH) and Hawwah (EVE) isn't this a miracle it's amazing to people their children their children and the whole earth is full of people and when ALLAH has created Adam (PBUH) and Hawwah (EVE) and when he has dispersed people all over the earth then he is also giving them certain laws to live by certain rules to live by certain etiquette that they must observe because if they will not observe those etiquette those rules then what will happen it will lead to disorder injustice so to avoid that we have to follow the law of ALLAH this is why ALLAH says to fear ALLAH again ALLAH says have fear of ALLAH why because without the fear of ALLAH justice cannot be done without the fear of ALLAH people cannot fulfill their responsibilities they cannot give the rights to others so fear ALLAH and the one by whom you demand! from one another so for example a brother is demanding his rights from his brother, a child is demanding his rights from his parents, Parents are demanding their rights from who? from their children, cousins are demanding their rights from one another or friends or coworkers they demand rights from one another isn't that so employees demand their rights from the employers? We see that everyone is fighting for their rights they are demanding their rights and those who believe in ALLAH what do they say? for the sake of ALLAH give me what I deserve! for the sake of ALLAH give me my right. In HIS name, you demand rights from one another in HIS name you ask each other you seek each other you make contracts with one another you make promises with one another now for example marriage how does it happen when one asks for the hand of the other and then finally the contract is made in whose name by making who a witness ALLAH Subhan O TALLAH.

Many contracts are made and people testify to their faith in who ALLAH Subhan O TALLAH or they say that by ALLAH I will fulfill this okay by God I will fulfill this so you made demands from one another you asked from one another you make contracts with one another pledges with one another using whose name ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH name and when ALLAH name is mentioned at such an occasion then what's the point there are two benefits one is that a person is making ALLAH a witness okay that he's showing to people that look I make ALLAH a witness by making this contract I'm serious about it I will fulfill my duties, my obligations okay so for example a husband and wife getting married. ALLAH is made a witness obviously they're witnesses among the people as well but ALLAH name is also mentioned why to show that we fear ALLAH and we acknowledge the responsibilities that ALLAH has laid upon us and out of his fear out of being dutiful to him we will fulfill our responsibilities and our duties so this is one benefit and the other benefit that is when ALLAH name is mentioned then you are basically making the other fearful of ALLAH okay that look ALLAH knows ALLAH is watching so do what you have to do so make sure you fulfill your responsibility.

Like for example if you make a deal with your brother and you involve your father in it or you involve your mother in it why is the mother there what's the role of the mother or the father to make sure that your brother will do what he's supposed to do and you do what you're supposed to do so these are the two benefits so you demand your rights in HIS name you make promises pledges you use HIS name you know people say all the time for God's sake all right do this or don't do this or stop this we use ALLAH name all the time in so many matters you know whether it's personal ,social or financial ALLAH's name is used. So, ALLAH is telling us that fear HIM you use HIS name all the time when you deal with one another so why do you forget HIM when it comes time to act when it comes time to fulfill your responsibility why do you forget HIM.

Relationships are formed in the womb, the womb where the baby grows in the mother and we see that it's the womb through which relationships are established isn't that so that if a child develops in the womb in the uterus of a woman then whose child is he or she? That woman's child okay and whoever made her pregnant then that child is also his if there are you know subsequent pregnancies one after the other then all those children who have gone in the same womb they're related as well correct, even if the father is different they are related to one another so we see that through wombs blood relationships are established it is what connects people you know blood relationships, this is what connects people maternal or paternal relationships so what does it refer to it refers to the relationships whether they are maternal or

paternal through the mother's side or through the father's side. Now ALLAH says fear ALLAH in whose name you demand your rights from each other and also the relationships meaning also fear ALLAH concerning the relationships you have, fear of ALLAH that he will hold you accountable and have fear of ALLAH even with regards to the relationships! and what is Taqwa with regards to their relationships with regards to your relatives that you give them their due and you don't cut off from them, you look after them you are concerned for them you maintain good ties with them because other relationships you know people working together people going to the same class being friends these you can choose isn't that so? You can choose to be someone's friend, you can choose to be close to someone but can you choose your mother? Or can you choose your sibling? If you get married to someone and he has a mother you can't choose her if he has a father you can't choose him if he has a sister or a brother you can't choose them so there are relatives from a person's mother's side from a person's father's side through your spouse which ALLAH gives you which ALLAH gives you HE decides them for you, you have no choice concerning them and this is the reason why sometimes it is difficult to maintain ties with them because if there is a person when you know you are with them for sometimes you're studying in the same class you know them for a few years and then you weren't really close with them you move on you go your way they go their way you forget about them but if it's your brother or your sister even if you're not living in the same house can you forget about them? Can you ignore them? Can you just exclude them from your life if you're very angry with a relative can you just exclude them from your life? you cannot! can you cut off from them no you cannot! so this is the reason why relatives become a huge test for people even the closest relatives, even the closest relatives can be a huge test so this is why ALLAH says and also fear ALLAH concerning the relatives of yours because you will be asked about them you know on the day of judgement people will have to cross the bridge every single person.

Every single person is going to have to cross the bridge and that bridge how sharp is it? as sharp as a sword how fine is it as fine as a hair everyone has to cross that bridge some people will cross it at the speed of lightning other people will cross it at a slightly slower pace people will cross it at various speeds depending on the level of their piety depending on the level of their righteousness on their good conduct and we see that on the Sirath (bridge name) there are like hooks mentioned in the Hadees, we learn about this hooks that will come and like attack people because of which they'll fall and one of the reasons will be because of cutting their relationships that those who cut off, their relationships they will not be able to cross the Sirath (bridge) easily those who don't maintain good ties with their relatives will not be able to cross the Sirath easily it will be very risky very difficult because you see in this life also it's as though you're going on a Sirath that you're working so hard and their relatives you know they say something they do something because of that you're so hurt you're so annoyed you're so disturbed but either you have to bear with that challenge now and pass the test and if you don't do it then you'll suffer on the day of judgment so fear a lot!

So, you ask one another, you make demands from one another in the name of ALLAH and also in the name of your relationships meaning that sometimes you say for the sake of ALLAH do this and sometimes you say for the sake of your mother for the sake of your father for the sake of your family isn't that so like sometimes someone will say ALLAH is watching you, get up and pray and another time someone will say your mother has told you so many times, it's your mother how many times is she supposed to help you get up and pray. Look she is your mother have some respect for the relationship that exists between you and her have some respect for that relationship so many times people will use the relationship that exists between them and others as a means to get their rights.

You occasionally use the name of your relatives or you use this relationship to get so many benefits but when it comes time to really fulfill your duty to your mother and your father and your brother then what do you do?

So, fear ALLAH. Indeed, ALLAH is ever watchful over you constantly, ALLAH is watching everything they're doing ALLAH is the overseer from whom nothing is hidden ALLAH is always watching you and you know if somebody's watching your neck what does it mean they're watching you from behind that sometimes you don't remember that they're there it's like there's a camera right behind you, you forget it's there but it's following you wherever you're going whatever you're saying whatever you're doing it's following you, you can't hide you forget but it's there likewise ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is always watching us we forget but it doesn't mean he's not watching us so he watches you at all times in every situation every circumstance that you're in and he takes care of you constantly he observes your deeds so

when he's watching you! have some shame! Really have some shame if you know that somebody is watching you a camera is following you everywhere so you should at least have the decency to speak nicely and to behave well and control yourself and just show some good attitude you know say some kind words but unfortunately, this kind of fear doesn't even exist you know today in people anymore that on camera people will do the most absurd things, they will say the most absurd things they will act in a way that are so foolish just to make some money or just to help someone else get richer. So, anyway the point is that if someone's watching you, you better be alert who's watching every single one of us ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Now this verse, all of us have heard it? How many of you know this verse or you think you know this verse like it sounds too familiar because you've heard It over and over and over again isn't it so? At a Friday sermon or at you know someone's wedding at so many occasions at a lecture you hear this verse at the beginning because the Prophet of ALLAH Muhammad, it was his habit that when he would give a sermon whether it was the marriage or any other when he would address people he would recite this verse why do you think you would recite this verse because if you look at this verse what are we reminded of? We are reminded first of all about the Taqwa of ALLAH, isn't it?

So, fear ALLAH because without the fear of ALLAH, we can't obey HIM without the fear of ALLAH we cannot be fair to one another secondly, we are reminded in this verse about the fact that all of us people are the same family we are all one big family because our origin is the same Adam (PBUH) and Hawwah (EVE) so that means that no person, no race, no citizen of our country is better than any other human being if you have the passport of one country it doesn't mean that you're better compared to those people who don't have the passport of that country likewise if there is a person who has beautiful figure has a beautiful face that doesn't make them any better compared to a person who doesn't have that much of a beautiful face because all of us are what one big family this is why the Prophet Muhammad said very clearly that no white person has a superiority over black or a black one has superiority over white one except for the one who has Taqwa. The most honorable of you in the sight of ALLAH is who? the one who has Taqwa so this verse reminds us of who we are and then this verse reminds us of the fact that we use the name of ALLAH so much but when we use it why aren't we very conscious of HIM when we use ALLAH's name.

Verse 2

And give orphans their properties, and do not substitute your bad with their good. And do not consume their properties by combining them with yours, for that would be a serious sin.

Tafseer

And give to the orphans (that is a minor who has not reached the age of puberty and their father has died) their properties that which they inherited from their father so give it to them don't take it for yourselves, it implies to the mother and the guardians and anyone else who makes a claim on the property inherited by the orphan, One should give everything what the orphan child has owned or inherited to the orphan when he grows up and reaches adulthood and do not exchange the impure with the pure that is to exchange your bad wealth or not in good condition assets with the orphan child in your family owned or inherited better condition wealth and assets. So, do not exchange your poor condition assets with their good condition assets like your poor condition home with their better condition homes or your poor furniture, books, utensils, clothes and other assets, with the better condition one of the orphan child. And also, do not consume their properties quickly so by the time they reach adulthood you have consumed it all or a large part of it on yourselves. As since the orphan is a child and no one would be there to speak for them so the guardian should not misuse the properties of the orphans by adding it to their own property and take advantage of it as the orphan is a child and he wouldn't even know about it. GOD said it to be a really bad sin that is by taking unfair advantage of orphan properties and misusing them for one's own purposes specially with orphans of relatives. But with this condition in place it doesn't mean one should avoid taking care of orphans as taking care of orphans is related as a great act of righteousness and Prophet Muhammad said the one who takes care of orphans would be in paradise with me. Since it is a really difficult thing to do because of the child unusual behavior with their new guardians so you need a lot of patience to deal with the orphans and that is why it is really tough job but with very high rewards if done with proper justice. So, in Quran Allah speaks for the weak the orphans and commanded the people to do fair justice with them. So, in this Ayat we learn that in Islam a minor can also own properties with a guardian in place to care for them and the guardian should not misuse the property of the minor or the orphan by either exchanging or consuming them quickly for own purpose.

Surah AR Rad (Thunder) 13

Verse 11

For each one is successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah Subhan O Tallah. Indeed, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Allah Subhan O Tallah any patron.

Tafseer:

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sends his angels for His servants (us) in succession which are present in front of them and behind them which are constantly guarding them on ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH commands that is they protect us and also guard our deeds that is what ever good we say angels are catching it to preserve it so we are constantly being watched by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and guarded by angels, who are preserving our actions and behavior, these angels are different angels who takes turn around you at different times of day and night, all of them assemble together at Fajr and Asr Prayer and those who stayed with you during the night ascends to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH asks them how did you left my servants so they reply we found them praying so we left them praying so this is for people who were praying otherwise they tell whatever you were doing. The angels protect our deeds and our actions and also the angels guard us that is protect us from danger. So, if there is some harm that is not decreed to a person than the angel protects the person from that harm by keeping it away and if there is some harm that is decreed towards the person then the angels just steps away, so only that thing will harm you that are meant to harm you otherwise angels will protect you. So, at night when you sleep there is an angel that protects you from creatures and everything of the night which are not meant to harm you.

The state of the people is not changed by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH if a person is not going to change himself which means a person has to fix his faults himself then ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will help him, A person has to take responsibility to improve, to make a change, to be committed to change and then ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH help will also come, we depend a lot on others to change which is not a good approach we should make the change within ourselves rather than depending on other people and stuff like if you want to be organized then you should make the change within to organize yourself rather than depending on some software or external piece of furniture etc. To get you organized so you should take the responsibility yourself and when you do that Allah Subhan O Tallah will guide you because this is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH law that nothing will change unless you change yourself so a miracle is not going to happen unless you strive yourself for the change or improvement. So, when our situation changes its quite often that we made something wrong and responsible for the hostile condition so we should change our selves and improve our selves to resolve problems in our life and then with our efforts for the change ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH help will also come. So, take responsibility of your actions and then you will see a good change happening in your life, and when ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH decides something harmful should happen to a person or a nation then nothing can prevent that from happening and at that time you do not have any protector or guardian to save you from the decree of Allah Subhan O Tallah because there is no escape from the verdict of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH as no one can help you and no place can save you from that. So, whenever something bad happens it is only ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH that you should seek guidance and help from.

Verse 12

It is HE who shows you lightening, [causing] fear and aspiration, and generates the heavy clouds.

Tafseer:

So, HE shows you lightning the lightning that is in the sky and he shows it to you as fear and also as hope meaning when you see that lightning what happens you become worried, you become fearful and at the same time there is also hope. Fear of what? Fear of being struck by that lightning, fear of that lightning falling onto the earth destroying people animals land etc. And hope! hope of what? Rain and he raises meaning HE produces, HE creates, HE brings into the clouds that are very heavy. So, HE produces heavy clouds meaning clouds that are very heavy with what water, that is rain bearing clouds. So, when Allah shows us lightning on one side there is fear and on the other side there is hope if you think about it it's one thing but it brings about completely opposite different feelings in people and this is what we saw in surah Yousuf as well that everything that happens it has its opposite as well. Were you being sad today you will be happy tomorrow, were you're suffering from loss today you will be victorious tomorrow! So similarly Lightening! when we see it there's fear and there's also hope and if you think about it when there is lightening and it's followed by a storm that storm could bring about two opposite results as well on the one hand it could cause plants to grow it could make the entire air very nice and fresh and on the other hand it would bring about destruction.

Verse 13

And the thunder exalts [ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH] with praise of HIM - and the angels [as well] from fear of HIM - and HE sends thunderbolts and strikes there with whom HE wills while they dispute about Allah; and HE is severe in assault.

Tafseer:

And the thunder exalts; exalts whom ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. Al -RAD الرَّعْدُ is the sound of thunder this is what the surah has been named after. It is a loud rumbling or crashing sound that is heard when after a lightning flash, so you see the lightning comes first and then after the lightning you hear the thunder. The thunder as you hear it in reality what's happening you just hear a very loud blast but in reality, the thunder is actually glorifying ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH with his praise. So, the thunder declares the perfection of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH! How? By praising HIM and how does this thunder do that by the sound that it produces. Every single creature praises ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH but you do not understand their praise. You think it's just a sound but in reality, this creation of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH what it's doing its glorifying ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and the angels as well meaning; The angels also praise ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH at the same time from HIS fear.

And HE sends the thunderbolts that falls to the ground from the sky (heavy clouds). So, flash of lightning that you see in the sky which is followed by thunder (sound) and which is sometimes followed by the lightning falling down from the sky. And HE sends the thunderbolt and whomever ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH wills ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH strike him with thunderbolt such so that a person sometimes even dies because of that thunderbolt and sometimes it happens when the people are disputing concerning ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. Sometimes it happens right when people are busy arguing and debating about ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sends a thunderbolt from the sky striking that person why? To show HIS might to show HIS power to remind the people that HE is listening to what you're saying, you dare argue concerning ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH as HE is listening to you and watching you and HE knows what you're doing.

So, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sends this to remind people at the very occasion when they are busy arguing about HIM. It happens many times that a person is doing something wrong and right at that time something bad happens and when that happens you're like maybe what I was doing was not right I shouldn't have been doing it for example you're walking somewhere you're shouting you're yelling at someone then all of a sudden you hit your toe against table or something and then you're like I shouldn't be saying this so when you're doing something wrong and at that moment you're struck by something you realize what you're doing was wrong.

One should look at the might and power of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH that HE shows you lightning HE makes you hear the thunder and the thunder is actually the praise and the Angels begin praising ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH at that moment and then ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH sends down thunderbolt from the sky from the clouds and yet the people they argue about ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH yet they argue whether or not HE exists. Look at the power of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH who does all of this yet they argue about HIM, about HIS existence about HIS Oneness about whether or not HE is the ONE Who sent the Quran?

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is severe in assault that is to impose a calamity, to impose some disaster, to strike someone with a disaster and it's basically to skillfully do this with a lot of skill with a lot of power. ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH can impose a calamity on someone a severe retribution against someone so that they cannot escape. And HE is severe in the assault because, think about it for example what is mentioned over here is thunderbolts. The way they strike people or the way they strike buildings and sometimes trees can people avoid them at all? Can they? No, they can't! there is no way of avoiding it you can do things from before but if you happen to be outside at that time and if it happens to fall on you what can you do to avoid it nothing. So, to skillfully impose a calamity on someone that they cannot escape and to do it with ONE's might and power.

Surah An- Nahl (The Bee) 16

Verse 91

When you make a vow to GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) then fulfill it and when you take an Oath then don't break it because you have made GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) your Guarantor and what all you do GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows it.

Tafseer

Here the example can be taken when you go for a contractual agreement for renting an apartment the person providing you the service asks for a guarantor that if in case you are unable to pay your rent then the guarantor will pay, So you ask your father to be your guarantor so in case you don't pay the rent then your father will pay the rent in your place, so similarly when you make a promise or take an Oath on GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) then you have made GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) your guarantor so how can you break your promise because if you do you have misuse the name of GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows everything whatever you will do so don't misuse the name of GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH). So, whenever you take an Oath then fulfill it don't break it and don't misuse the name of GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) because other people may not know your intentions but GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows everything. And when a person breaks his promise or an oath then he shows how unreliable, untrustworthy and dishonest person he is with lack of Iman. As fear of GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is when you are alone with GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and no one else knows so do the right things even when someone is watching or not because GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is always watching.

And for this misdemeanor there is Azab ul Qabar that is punishment of the grave.

Verse 128

God (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is with those who are righteous and those who are virtuous.

Tafseer

GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is with all those who are righteous and those who are virtuous with others. So even when you are talking or debating with others do it highly ethically if you want GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) to be with you.

Surah AL Kahf (The Cave) 18

Verse (7)

GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) has made what is on the earth an ornament for it, to test them as to which of them is best in conduct.

Tafseer

What is on the Earth ***Animals, Inanimate Objects, Plants, Minerals and other buried treasures****. All these are ornaments of Earth and its Eleanor.*

Verse (23)

And never say about anything, "I will do that Tomorrow".

Tafseer

So never say about anything that you will do it later (tomorrow) that is do not procrastinate about things so if you make a plan then don't just stop there but continue and try to finish it as soon as possible rather than delaying it unnecessarily.

Surah Maryam (Mary) 19

Verse 88

And they say, "The Most Merciful has taken [for Himself] a son."

Tafseer

So, many people claim that The Most Merciful has a child, earlier in the Surah we learned about the story of Prophet Zachariah (PBUH) and we learned the story of Maryam (Mary), with the Christians belief that Jesus is the son of GOD, but this has been refuted as having a child is a human weakness, it's a human need and ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is above that so this concept has been disproved.

Verse 89

You have done an atrocious thing.

Tafseer

You (The People) have come up with an atrocious concept. That is the people have come up with a terrible concept and said something which is completely unacceptable by saying such things which is by associating partners (shirk) with ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH the people have done something so terrible that they have bring calamity upon themselves.

Verse 90

The heavens almost rupture therefrom and the earth splits open and the mountains collapse in devastation

Tafseer

Associating partners(shirk) with ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is such an atrocious thing to say that the skies would have almost ruptured (teared apart) and some calamity would have fall upon (the people) and the earth would have split open and the mountains would have collapsed in devastation because the Earth, the Mountains, and the Skies would have all been appalled by the statement and even they get so upset and disturbed by hearing such a disgraceful statement.

Verse 91

That they attribute to The Most Merciful a son.

Tafseer

Because of people committing (shirk) that is associating partners (son) to The Most Merciful. But how Merciful is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, how tolerant is GOD Almighty that this lie is said over and over again but ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH does not cause the sky to rend asunder, and the earth to split open or the mountains to collapse because ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is Exceedingly Gracious and Exceedingly Merciful.

Verse 92

And it is not appropriate for the Most Merciful that He should take a son.

Tafseer

It is not appropriate for the GOD to have a child (son) because if GOD would have a child (son) then HE would be very much like us (human) and it is not possible because ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is our creator and HE doesn't need to be like us, and since HE is our creator HE understands us better than any other thing. Also, if GOD would have a child then HE would also have a spouse and a family of children who would have more children which means GOD would lose his perfection and HIS sublimity and it would also imply that HE has been resembled with HIS own creation.

Verse 93

There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant.

Tafseer

It means ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH alone is the Master, HE is the KING of kings and everything else whether it is in the sky or on earth are all servants that is everything humans, angels and other creatures are all servants to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH that is HIS creation. This verse also tells us that everyone and everything is created and owned by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH whether they accept it or not they are all HIS creation and servants.

Verse 94

He has enumerated them and counted them a [full] counting.

Tafseer

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has enumerated (counted) how many servants HE has. It means ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH exactly knows how many servants HE has. Since everything is numbered so nothing escapes HIS Knowledge and Authority. So, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH knows about every bird, every human, every bug, every creature and everything. HIS knowledge is complete and perfect about everything and nothing has forgotten by HIM. So, everything is written and accounted by HIM and nothing is left out. Everything about the creation is also written and accounted so for example how many number of days a human or creature is about to live is known by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Verse 95

And all of them are coming to Him on the Day of Resurrection alone.

Tafseer

Every creature will come to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH on the day of judgement alone individually accountable and empty handed, each person will have to fend for himself on the day of judgement.

Verse 96

Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection.

Tafseer

Those who have gone on the path of righteousness, the believers! when they become alone on their path so ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH says don't worry bear this time when you're so lonely when you're alone and you're all by yourself you feel like you have no friends even your family has left you, your family has abandoned you it's just a few years just some time ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will replace those friends with better friends that family with better family. So, anything that you give up for the sake of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will give you better in return but you have to bear that hardship for HIS sake you have to make that sacrifice for HIS sake.

Verse 97

So, [O Muhammad], We have only made Qur'an easy in the Arabic language that you may give good tidings thereby to the righteous and warn thereby a hostile people.

Tafseer

So indeed, we have made it easy in the Arabic language, so that Prophet Muhammad can warn by this Quran the people of Arabia as the Arabs in those days were very hostile and a warring nation. So, the hostile nation has been completely transformed into a disciplined and civilized state with in two decades by Prophet Muhammad. So, what do the Arabs need for training is the Quran in their language.

Verse 98

And how many have We destroyed before them of generations? Do you perceive of them anyone or hear from them a sound?

Tafseer

You go by previous civilizations and when you go by their ruins do you hear? Do you hear their noise? A place that was once busy and full of people now that same place is lying empty do you see those people? Do you hear any sound of them? You go to their homes you'll find them empty, you go through their streets you'll find them laying desolate abandoned there's no life it's as if they never existed, completely wiped off the face of the earth! This is of warning; our time is limited we are heard today, we are sensed today, we are felt today and soon a time will come when we will not be sensed, we will not be heard, we will not be seen and before that time comes let's reflect on ourselves and fix ourselves

Surah AL-Anbiya (The Prophets) 21

Verse 95

And there is prohibition upon [the people of] a city which We have destroyed that they will [ever] return.

Tafseer

People who have died it is prohibited on them that they will ever return meaning it is not possible that once someone has left this world they will ever come back to it, they're not coming back. So, once we die we're not coming back to this world. We cannot come back and fix our mistakes we cannot, this is the only chance we have, the only chance! This is why it's so important to fix the state of the heart so that a person is not regretting later on.

Verse 96

Until when [the dam of] Gog and Magog have been opened and they, from every elevation, descend.

Tafseer

Before the day of judgement arrives, there are certain events that will definitely occur, there are major signs of the day of judgment when these signs will occur means that when the day of judgment is just going to happen any moment now all of those signs will happen for instance, the return of Essa (Jesus), the rising of the sun from the West likewise coming out of Gog and Magog (Yajuj wa Majuj) will happen. A wall has been built which prevents the Gog and Magog (Yajuj wa Majuj) coming out of their area and creating mischief on land but close to the day of judgment Gog and Magog will break through the wall (the barrier) and from every elevation (hill) they will descend.

Verse 97

And [when] the true promise has approached; then suddenly the eyes of those who disbelieved will be staring [in horror, while they say], "O woe to us; we had been unmindful of this; rather, we were wrongdoers."

Tafseer

Once the day of judgement will occur by then suddenly as it will occur, they will be staring in horror who will be staring in horror the eyes of those who disbelieve, they will be shocked, they will be bewildered as they never expected a day like that, they never expected the hereafter the judgement to come and they will say certainly we were unmindful of this, we forgot this, we never thought about this, we never worried about the coming of this day, we were never concerned about the day of judgement rather we were wrongdoers how could we reject this we were clearly at fault, how could we deny the hour how could we deny this end when we know that every beginning has an end then this world also had an end, our lives also had an end this is what mentioned over here is about the day of judgment that this is how the disbelievers will react to the occurrence of the day of judgment.

Verse 98

Indeed, you [disbelievers] and what you worship other than Allah are the firewood of Hell. You will be coming to [enter] it.

Tafseer

And whatever that you worship besides Allah, you and your false gods, your idols are all fuel of hell.

Verse 99

Had these [false deities] been [actual] gods, they would not have come to it, but all are eternal therein.

Tafseer

If these idols were truly gods they would never have entered it and all the idols and those who worship them eternally they will all remain in hell.

Verse 100

For them therein is heavy sighing, and they therein will not hear.

Tafseer

They will hear the sound of heavy sighing, that is all they will hear in hell, people sighing! why? Out of pain out of regrets and they shall not hear, meaning they will become deaf to any peaceful sound, they will become deaf to any comforting words, as they will not hear anything good.

Verse 101
Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us - they are from it far removed.

Tafseer

Here ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH mentioned about prophets & messengers who were before the advent of Islam. Those for whom Allah has promised, those who were good, those who never asked that people should worship them, in fact they preached only Tawheed, they brought the message of belief in Allah alone they will not! they will not be in hell but rather far away from it in Heaven.

Verse 102
They will not hear its sound, while they are, in that which their souls desire, abiding eternally.

Tafseer

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH righteous servants will be so far away from hell that they will not even hear its faintest sound. They will be enjoying whatever their souls desire eternally, and will not be disturbed.

Verse 103

They will not be grieved by the greatest terror, and the angels will meet them, [saying], "This is your Day which you have been promised"

Tafseer

They will not be grieved by their greatest terror which is the moment of death, and the Angels will greet them and say this is the day which you have been promised as for a believer who has faith in Allah day of judgement is the day that he has been waiting for. So, on the day of judgement when the trumpet will be blown everyone will be terrified except for the righteous believers.

Verse 104

The Day when We will fold the heaven like the folding of a [written] sheet for the records. As We began the first creation, WE will repeat it. [That is] a promise binding upon Us. Indeed, WE will do it.

Tafseer

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH on the day of judgement will roll the skies and earth and fold everything up just like folding of a scroll for records. Just as ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH created first HE will create again meaning resurrection, have no doubt this is a promise on ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and indeed HE will fulfill it.

Verse 105

And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants.

Tafseer

And as it is written in the scripture (Zabur) book [of Psalms] given to Da'ud Alay Salam (David P.B.U.H) after the reminders that indeed the land in paradise will be inherited by the ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH righteous servants, so ultimately success is for whom those who are upon the truth, yes it may be difficult to hold on to the truth but ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will grant success.

Verse 106

Indeed, in this [Qur'an] is notification for a worshipping people.

Tafseer

Indeed, in this Quran there is open notification for all those who worship ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Verse 107

And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.

Tafseer

The Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) was sent as a mercy to all people. He was sent not as a punishment for the people, not to bring pain and hardship for the people but to bring mercy, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH mercy to the people. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) uncle Abu Talib describes him as a faultless handsome noble face, who has mercy falls like rain from his face, who was support for the orphans and defense for the widows this was his character, a mercy to the world's. The message of Tawheed that he brings that is the message of belief in ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH that in reality is a mercy. People teach many things, many ideologies but what do they promote? Who do they promote? Worldly success at the cost of someone else's loss but the message of Islam what is it? It is success in the world and in hereafter even if you have to suffer, you suffer now so that you can be successful later.

Verse 108

Say, "It is revealed to me that your GOD is only One GOD, so will you submit?"

Tafseer

It has been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad to tell that everyone GOD is only One GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH), So are they going to submit? That is are the polytheists going to submit to ONE GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and be believers (Muslims)?

Surah Al Nur (The Light) 24

Verse (35)

GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is the Light of heavens and earth. Example of GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) brightness is like perhaps there is a vault inside which there is a lamp, and the lamp is in a cresset, and the cresset is (so clear and transparent) perhaps like a glittering pearl star lit with an oil of a blessed tree(i.e.) olive neither of east nor of west, (It feels like) its oil whether fire doesn't even touch it, is ready to ignite (kindle) light upon light (bright and sunny). GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) guides whom GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) wills with GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) light, and those examples that has been cited by GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) are for the people to understand and GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is All-Aware of everything.

Tafseer

This Surah is revealed by (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and made obligatory and people are not given choices rather to follow what is discussed in this Surah. Following these commands is the enlightenment and not following it, is getting into darkness. (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is the light of heavens and the earth, since light is not only visible itself but it also makes other things visible as well, light is what makes us see things, light is what makes us perceive things, so if you are in an absolute dark room and you bumped into something you don't know what it is but when you turn the light on you get to know what the object is so this is the benefit of light it enables us to know about things we didn't know. Light is of different kinds, one is of physical type which makes us see things like the sun or moon or a lamp producing light that has been created and who is the creator of this light is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. There is another kind of light which is not physical like the light of the eyes with which vision works like if there is light outside but if inside of a person is dark then one cannot be able to see. And there is also another kind of light which is intangible which is guidance. So, (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) takes people out of darkness and give them light which is guidance.

So, the source of all type of light is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH because (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is the creator of all types of light as ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the creator of the sun and the moon, the fire and electricity, and if its intangible light like guidance than ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the source of that guidance as ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is The ONE WHO has guided mankind, humanity and every inhabitant of the heavens and the earth. And for the spiritual light ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has provided the enlightenment for the mankind.

So, light is the most essential thing for our physical body as everyone needs light to grow and to live in the world. So, we need this light for our physical progress and also for our worldly progress (in type of Guidance). Since light is so essential for physical life it is also very essential for spiritual life as well. So, ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the source of physical light as well as the spiritual light (guidance). ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the Light of all kinds. And we can classify the light in two ways one is the creation of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and one are the attributes of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. The examples of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH as light is the guidance that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH had provided such as The Quran and the ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH commands and the prophets are also types of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH light in the form of guidance.

Like Prophet Muhammad was also a type of light sent by (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) in the form of guidance to people when they were in the shadow of darkness which is ignorance. Here the example is given of believers' heart in which ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH light has settled in the form of Iman.

The example of light (flame) is inside a niche for the purpose of protecting the light from all sides and to protect the light from extinguishing. In the niche, there is a lamp whose flames is more whitish that is not producing (hot red flames) but giving out cooler whiter bright lighting effect and this lamp is inside a glass case. The glass case protects the light and enhances the light and it happens only when the glass is crystal clear like a star with very high brightness(shine) like a pearly white elegant star which is repelling darkness(ugliness) and throwing beauty all around it.

The previous description is about the lamp, now comes the actual flame which is lit that is the fuel used to kindle it is from a blessed tree of olive whose oil is used to fuel this lamp. And the tree is neither eastern nor it is western that is not from the eastern part of the world or from the western part of the world so one opinion is it is from the middle that is middle east and other opinion is it is not from east or west but from out of this world. The implication here is the guidance that came from Allah is from out of this world which means the book of guidance The Quran is from out of this world. And the oil used is bright in itself and it doesn't even need to be lit by fire and when the fire will touch it then you will get layers of light upon light extremely radiant light. The light of (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) guidance is there always present but not everyone gets it as only those chosen by (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) gets the light of guidance and (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows who is worthy of this light of guidance which is flawless, free from every kind of imperfection and the examples that has been cited by (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) are for the people to understand and (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is aware of everything.

This verse tells about the light of (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) that is the guidance of (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) which is pure and free from all evil, once this light reaches the heart of the believer it fills the heart with light (guidance). So, (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) has enlighten the heavens and the earth as (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is their creator and (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is their guide, without (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) there is no guidance, if a person takes (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) out of the picture than he is in complete darkness (of ignorance), and the light (the guidance) is the most perfect, most beautiful, flawless and enlightening and the believer who excepts this light than this person heart is filled with this light. The lamp is in the light (glowing flame) of Iman (faith) and that lamp is in the glass case which is the heart when the heart is clean it is pure, transparent without sins and other evil like the heart of a child but with the passage of time it gets filled with impurities and get clouded with darkness of worldly affairs so we need to clean it which is done via Istagfar that is by seeking forgiveness. The glass is very fragile and also very hard like the believer's heart which is bright and sometimes soft but sometimes very harsh but lit with the flame of Iman, the fuel of this lamp is the wahi (the revelations) sent by (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and it is so pure that it doesn't need a flame, like the guidance in the Quran is pure that is the laws of (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is very pure whether we accept and practice it or not it is there and it is flawless. So, your flame of Iman needs the refill of the guidance of Quran which act likes an oil of a blessed tree to keep your flame of Iman glowing. And the source of your guidance is (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH).

Al Furqan (The Criterion) 25

Verse 49

That We may bring to life thereby a dead land and give it as drink to those We created of numerous livestock and men.

Tafseer

So that We may bring life through it! A land that was dead, void of any vegetation, no plants and no plant that means no insects that means no bees that means no birds. Dead- land but what happens when rain comes down? It turns alive! There's so much life on it, and We give to drink it. This rain water that comes down We give it to drink, from that which We have created who benefits, who drinks this rain water? Grazing livestock and many, many people. They benefit from this rain.

Surah Al Ankabut (The Spider) 29

Verse 19

Have they not considered how Allah begins creation and then repeats it? Indeed that, for Allah, is easy.

Tafseer

Have they not seen, have they not considered? How ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH initiates the process of creation? which means to start something, to begin something and it is to do something for the first time that is it has been done for the first time and no one has ever done it before and it's also to start the process like for example you have a machine you set everything up and then what do you do you turn the button on and you start the process, you initiate the process so then it starts working. It has two meanings first of all to do something for the very first time which nobody else has ever done it before and secondly to initiate, to begin the process. So, have they not seen as to how ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH initiates the creation? what does it mean by that that how ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH initiates the creation that never existed before that he created the human being which never ever existed before when ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH made you did you exist before? No, HE made you for the very first time and secondly how ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH begins the process of creation for example in the womb of the mother how the process of the creation of the human being it begins and then HE repeats it so how HE repeats it just as HE originated it the first time. Every time a human being is born the same process of creation is repeated again and the human beings are created, and the human beings ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has created these human beings, they will be resurrected again and that process of creation of everything is very easy for ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Surah AR-Rum (The Romans) 30

Verse 21

And of HIS signs is that HE created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and HE placed between you, affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought.

Tafseer

And obvious signs that HE created for you meaning HE created for your sake, for your benefit in order to fulfill your need what did he create for you? From yourselves spouses that is, HE created from yourselves spouses what does it mean by this? That your spouse's, your mates are of your kind they're not of another species, or another type of creation it's not that if a human-being wishes to reproduce then he has to go to another creation, NO!

IF you look at it the wife of Adam (P.B.U.H), she was created from whom? From Adam (P.B.U.H). It wasn't that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH created Adam (P.B.U.H) separately and created Hawwah separately no! ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH created Adam (P.B.U.H) and from him HE made his wife why so that there is this element of attachment, of closeness, of bonding that we are off one another but unfortunately what do people think that men and women what are they, rivals? What are they? They're not ones who complement one another but they are as though enemies to one another which is why there is always a sense of competition there's always a sense of we are better, we are not inferior this is a result of arrogance if you look at it this is a huge blessing of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH that women are created from men and women and men are of same species this is the reason why there is love there is bonding there's attachment between the man and wife, so that you will find tranquility in her.

Why did ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH create your spouse from yourselves why is it that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH created Hawwah from Adam (PBUH) and why is it that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has created the mates of human beings from their own kind so that you all can find rest and comfort in her that is to take rest and to get pleasure from something because if human beings had to mate with another creation there would be no attraction it would not be a means of tranquility not at all so the fact that the spouses are from the same species, they're human beings this is a means of inclination to one another this is a means of attraction for one another loving one another it's a cause of love. Because difference, what are they? They're cause of aversion but when both are similar that is a cause of love and unity. Think about it naturally which people even are you inclined to those who are similar to you isn't those who have the same taste as yours and those people who think differently, who have a different taste, who like to talk about different things do you have any kind of attachment with them no it's not possible so it's a huge blessing that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has created the mate of human being from the human beings themselves.

And not just that HE has made between all of you between who you refer to? first of all, the husband and the wife. And secondly refers to all of you human beings that HE has placed between you the husband and wife in particular and also, the human beings in general that is not just the husband and wife, but also human beings in general then what has HE created between you love, affection and mercy. And this love is not selfish love but the love which also have an element of concern and wellbeing of each other, to take care of each other and to forgive each other in difficult times. And this love and mercy is not just amongst husband and wives but in people in general that is sometimes in parents and children, and sometimes within siblings, and sometimes amongst, friends, relatives, distant relatives', co-workers. So, this feeling of love and mercy who has put it in the hearts of people? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. And this is what differentiates people from rest of the creation! This is what makes human beings human! That is when they care for one another. You don't see this kind of love, affection & mercy among other creatures perhaps in animal mother and child will have this love and affection but not in general between other animals. As they may have some love and mercy amongst them but it is not at the level we see in human beings. Indeed, in that they're surely signs for who? For those people who reflect so a person needs to reflect in order to learn about the various signs in this creation of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Surah As-Saffat (The Aligners) 37

Verse 8

[So] they may not listen to the exalted assembly [of angels] and are pelted from every side.

Verse 9

Repelled; and for them is a constant punishment

Verse 10

Except one who snatches [some words] by theft, but they are pursued by a burning flame, piercing [in brightness].

Surah Al- Hijr (The Rocky Tract) 15

Verse 17

And We have protected it from every devil expelled [from the mercy of ALLAH]

Verse 18

Except one who steals a hearing and is pursued by a clear burning flame.

Tafseer (of both Surah mentioned verses)

Future can completely and accurately be only predicted by GOD Almighty because only GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows what will happen in the future but GOD do share some limited information according to the liking of GOD with the angels in sky who if required relay that information to others on earth but sometimes some part of that information while relaying by angels is snooped by the devil who then pass on that slight part of information to its companion on earth who tells that slight part of information combined with tens of other lies to the gullible information seeker! The devil who sneaks that slight part of information from angels are always killed by a comet chasing it so even that devil is unable to completely sneak or pass the complete information given to angels. And the devil who even if manages to eavesdrop the slight information from space above a glowing ember is send towards them.

Note: GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is used for better understanding and grasping of non-Muslims.

Muslims should read ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH

Surah Fussilat (Detailed) 41

Verse 34

And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.

Tafseer

Good and the evil are not the same they're not equal at all! here emphasis is being given but the good and the bad are not equal No! not at all no way they're not equal. Why would you call someone to ALLAH because you're inviting them to faith and because belief and disbelief are not the same. Patience is good! and being impatient is not good. Are they the same being patient and being Impatient? Not at all. In their merit, they're not the same in their result they're not the same in their reward or in the consequence they're not the same likewise patience and anger, tolerance and forgiveness they're not the same. Then what should you do if they're not the same? What should you adopt the good or the evil? Always the good!

When you say a good statement, you give out positive vibes, positive feelings what does that create love affection, that closeness and intimacy that level of comfort that two people develop with each other because of which they can influence each other in a much better way you could, you know because of the love and the friendship and the intimacy that you share with someone because you always say positive statements to them perhaps they will realize themselves that their decision was not wise so the effect is different and an evil statement when you're
treating an adult like an immature child will never develop that trust and because of that the two will not care for each other they will not be concerned for each other.

So good and evil are not the same, so when you say something hurtful don't expect good results when you say something mean don't expect love and concern from the other you understand our problem is we say such hurtful evil statements and what do we want from the other person change! it's as if we want to believe them into listening to us it doesn't work like that because good brings good and evil brings evil so good and evil are not the same when you say something good you will expect good results and when you say something evil please don't expect good results.

So always respond in a better way meaning do better than what the other did to you, so for example if someone falsely accuses you then say something like if what you say is true then may ALLAH forgive me and if what you say is false then may ALLAH forgive you this is a better response as opposed to saying something harsh in return. So, between the two of if there was enmity previously because of which they did evil to you what will happen because you repelled their evil with good what's going to happen that person with whom you had enmity he will be a friend who is a close intimate friend this is how you turn enmity into love, you turn hatred into friendship.

Verse 35

But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good].

Tafseer:

None will have the ability to repel evil with good except those who have patience. And none can have deal in the best way except those who will have the perseverance and endurance to forbear. So, in a difficult situation one should have patience to tolerate other people abusive insults and handle the situation calmly by responding in a good manner if a response is required instead of arguing or doing the same negative thing what the other abusive person is doing. And only those who have the patience to forbear and with the fortune of goodness can respond in a positive and polite manner.

Surah Ash-Shura (Consultation) 42

Verse 36

(People) whatever capital and provision you are given is only the temporary benefits of this life. But what GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) possess is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH).

Tafseer

(People) whatever capital and provision you are given is insufficient be it the treasure of Croesus, so don't fall for it as it is only the temporary transitory benefits of this terrestrial life. But the reward GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) has for goodness in the heavenly life is much better, sustainable and everlasting than belongings of the earth for those who believe and rely on their GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH). SO, don't give preference to this finite life over eternal life because you will only regret if you do.

Surah AL Muzzammil (The Enwrapped) 73

Verse 20

Your *GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) very well knows that you and a group of others with you stands for devotion (sometimes) for nearly two-thirds of the night or (sometimes) for half of the night or (sometimes) for one-third of it. And GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) has full judgement about day and night. GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) very well knows that you will be unable to sustain it so GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) has been benevolent to you. So, read as much Quran as much easily possible for you. GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows that some of you would be sick, some of you would be travelling over land in search of GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) bounty and some would be fighting in GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) cause, So, read as much Quran as much easily possible for you, and strictly follow the prayers and regularly pay the zakat and lend GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) a generous loan and whatever goodness you will forward for yourselves you will find it with GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) better, and generously rewarded and keep on asking for GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) forgiveness, Indeed GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is Forgiving and Merciful.*

Tafseer

Your *GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) very well knows that you and a group of others with you stands up for night prayers (sometimes) for nearly two-thirds of the night or (sometimes) for half of the night or (sometimes) for one-third of it. And GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) has full judgement about day and night. GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) very well knows that you will be unable to sustain it so GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) has been benevolent to you by reducing the prayer time. So, read as much Quran (night prayers) as much* ***easily possible for you so even 2 Rakat would be consider enough but if someone pray for at least 8 Rakats*** *like Prophet Muhammad used to then it would be considered* ***more vantage****.* ***For night prayers, there is no limitation of time or Rakats. Reciting Surah Al Fatiha is the bare minimum to consider a complete prayer.***

GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows that some of you would be sick with illness, some of you would be travelling over land in search of GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) bounty that is travelling for trade or business purpose from city to city or country to country and some would be fighting in GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) cause that is Jihad or holy war, and any one of these three conditions or situation does occur to lots of people from time to time, So GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) ***has made (night prayers) optional*** *So, read as much Quran (night prayers) as much easily possible for you,* ***but strictly follow the regular prayers*** *and* ***consistently pay the due zakat*** *and lend GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) a generous loan and whatever goodness you will forward for yourselves you will find it with GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) better, and generously rewarded and keep on asking for GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) forgiveness, Indeed GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) is Forgiving and Merciful.*

Abasa (He Frowned) 80

Verse 24

Then let mankind look at his food -

Tafseer

Then let human being look at the food that he is eating, why is he so ungrateful when ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has given you everything. Life, guidance, perfect body ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has given you everything? Then why should you not obey HIM? humans should be grateful, he should look at all the blessings that ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has given to him but why is he so ungrateful? So, look at the food that you eat! How ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH provides it for you so that you can stay alive! How ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has provided it for you so that your body can nourish! How is the food coming to you? Look at the long process behind it.

Surah Al Mutaffifin (The Defrauders) 83

Verse 1
Woe to the defrauders.

Tafseer

Woe to those who give less than due, the punishment to defrauders are immense. Those who cheat with others by giving less than that is due by cheating on tiny fraction of items or on small amount of measures which is negligible or immeasurable. So Mutaffif (defrauder) is one who does cheating (fraud or tatfeef) on small level by clever means on daily basis not the one who does it on large scale and they do this small cheating deliberately not by any accident. This kind of cheating can be done on both tangible matters and intangible matters. Tangible matters can be for example like weights and measure. Like when buying and selling buyer purchases 500 grams of stuff but the seller provides him 470 grams only and charges for 500 grams full. Intangible matter can be like a person is due to work 8 hours and he charges for it but instead he works for 7 hours and 40 minutes and leave and charges for full 8 hours or like a person is supposed to complete a work but instead doing the work completely he partially does it and leaves some work undone. Like a person supposed to vacuum a room he only vacuums the areas visible to the eyes and leaves the rest of the room not apparently visible to eyes dirty. Another example can be a person while worshipping GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) doesn't perform Sajda or Rukooh properly and cuts corner while doing worship.

So tatfeef includes every kind of cheating with regards to dealing with people or while worshipping GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) on a small scale on regular basis.

So, woe to those people who gives short measure like cutting corners in due things. So, people should take lesson like those who only works to please their boss and not to completely fulfill the task or those who cut corners on things on daily basis thinking who knows well they should know that GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) knows and is watching and will be judging.

Surah Al Balad (The Land) 90

Verse 12

And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass?

Verse 13

It is the freeing of a slave

Tafseer (12 & 13)

Here it refers to the deeds that are good that are righteous but are truly difficult to perform. Such as freeing of the slaves. People are so proud of the money they spent on themselves but that is not what is liked by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH as spending money on oneself when you have the money is not the difficult task but spending money on others like on freeing someone from bondage or slavery is a real difficult and noble thing to do in the eyes of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH. So freeing slaves or freeing prisoners are noble, difficult and very righteous thing to do. The slave can be of your own or of someone else that is you buy their freedom. SO, this is true piety and this is truly difficult thing to do and if a person has done this then he should be truly credited for it. Because freeing slave is expensive and not an easy thing for one to do, Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH will save your every limb from hell fire for the limbs of the slave you freed.

Surah At Tin (The Fig) 95

Verse 1

By the fig and the olive

Tafseer

By the fig and by the olive. Here ALLAH SUBHA O TALLAH swears an oath by the fruit of fig and olive which shows its importance that is how much beneficial these fruits are that is how much full of beneficial nutrients these fruits are for the people. Here these fruits also refer to the place where it is originally grown which is the place of Palestine and Syria (Sham). These two places are signified over here because many prophets were sent to these places and the last messenger before Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), Prophet Essa (Jesus) was also from there.

Verse 2

And [by] Mount Sinai

Tafseer

Here ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH swears an oath by Mount Sinai which is the place where ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH speaks with Prophet Mousa (Moses P.B.U.H). Prophet Mousa (Moses P.B.U.H) is referred because He was one of the best messengers of Bani-Israel and He was given The Torah and he was the one at whose hand The Bani-Israel was freed from slavery and it was His teachings that Bani-Israel followed for many, many years. In fact, all the laws that Bani-Israel had to follow were given in The Torah. So, Mousa (Moses P.B.U.H) was a very significant Prophet.

Verse 3

And [by] this secure city [Makkah],

Tafseer

And by this city, which city? The city which is secured! which refers to the city of Makkah. Which is the city from where the last messenger of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH, Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is from. And Makkah is described by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH as a safe and secure city. It is secure because here no fighting is permissible, even before Islam in the age of ignorance the Polytheists respected the sanctity of the Harem of Makkah.

Verse 4

We have certainly created man in the best of stature;

Tafseer

ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH has created man in the best of forms, which means the human beings has been created in the best form compared to other creatures. This is why human beings are different from rest of the creatures and is the reason why humans cannot be called an animal because humans are very different and unique.

Verse 5

Then We return him to the lowest of the low,

Tafseer

It means after humans are created in the best of the forms then they are made into be the lowest of the low that is to be a disbeliever, one who is so low in life that they question the existence of its creator The GOD (ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH) and disbelieves in the guidance of life sent by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH and becomes worse than animals even worse than cattle's. So how does the human become lowest of the low? When he disbelieves, when he doesn't accept the guidance of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Verse 6

Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted.

Tafseer

But except for those people who did the righteous deeds, and believed in the guidance sent by ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH they are not amongst the low people but remained in the best of the forms and they are exempted from the hellfire and will be rewarded a place eternally in paradise.

Verse 7

So, what yet causes you to deny the Recompense?

Tafseer

What causes you to disbelief after the mentioned of the fact that Allah has send the guidance that Allah has created the Human beings in the best of stature (forms) and the one those who disbelieve becomes the lowest of the low human beings and only those who believe will have the rewards uninterrupted. So, what causes you to deny the religion and the day of recompense (judgement day)? So, when the truth has been made so evident (so clear) over here and when you have been made to realize that nothing is in your control, even your body aging is not in your control then still what makes you to deny? What gives you the courage to deny? What do you have in your hands? When even your body is not in your control! Your life is not in your control! So, what causes you to disbelieve?

Verse 8

Is not Allah the most just of judges?

Tafseer

Is ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH not the most just of all judges? Meaning ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH is the best and just of all the judges that is whenever ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH gives a ruling HE gives the best of the verdict. It is also a warning to the people and disbelievers that when ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH makes a judgement HE ensures to implement that so if HE makes a verdict for you can you be able to avoid that? No, you cannot! So, we should all submit to ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH.

Surah Al-Falaq (The Daybreak) 113

Verse 1

Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak

Tafseer

The Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is being commanded first of all and after Him. The address is to every single believer, every single listener, every person who hears this that, say this! Say I seek refuge, I seek the protection of! that is to seek refuge, to seek protection with someone and to not leave them, to hold on to them, to cling to them, trust upon them, rely on them, depend on them and not leave them for even a moment. Why? Because if you were to leave them you would be vulnerable, if you were to leave them you would suffer harm so Who should you turn to? Who should you rely upon, Whose protection should you seek? Who is HE? ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH but instead of ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH what has been mentioned here رَبِّ ٱلۡفَلَقِ. *Al Falaq literally means to cleave, to break something and the word Falaq is generally understood as over here especially daybreak. It is understood as morning why? because at the time of the morning as the Sun rises it breaks the entire horizon, it breaks the entire sky, the night sky which was covered in darkness what happens to it, from it comes out light. Falaq also gives a meaning of creation why because anything that comes into existence anything that is created how does it come into existence by the process of breaking apart, by the process of cleaving, tearing for example: the shell breaks, and then the chick comes out of the egg, similarly the seed erupts, it breaks, it cracks and from it comes out the plant and we see this in every creation that it bursts, it breaks and then another creation comes into being similarly we see that the human body, the cells that are in our blood what happens to them? They also break apart so the process of creation how is it done? By the process of Falaq this is why the word Falaq also applies to Makhluk (Creature) it also applies to creation.*

Say I seek refuge in the lord of Al Falaq meaning the lord of daybreak, the lord of the entire creation, HE is the one WHO causes the night to depart, and HE is the one WHO brings the day, HE is the one WHO removes darkness, and HE replaces the darkness with light. So, O! ALLAH SUBHAN O TALLAH; WHO rebel darkness and replaces it with light, save me from every harm, save me from every danger, give me light, give me guidance and protect me.